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SOCIETAS SCIENTIARUM FENNICA

COMMENTATIONES HUMANARUM LITTERARUM

TOMUS IV

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SOCIETAS SCIENTIARUM FENNICA
COMMENTATIONES HUMANARUM LITTERARUM. IV. 1.

INDIAN TRIBES
OF THE
ARGENTINE AND BOLIVIAN CHACO

ETHNOLOGICAL STUDIES

BY

RAFAEL KARSTEN, PH. D.

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINGFORS
FINLAND, AUTHOR OF „THE CIVILIZATION OF THE SOUTH
AMERICAN INDIANS", ETC.

Read January 18th 1932.

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HELSINGFORS 1932

PREFACE

000 *This book contains the ethnological material collected by me during my travels in the Argentine and Bolivian Gran Chaco in 1911—1913, my first scientific expedition to South America. In publishing it, I wish to express my gratitude to the Argentine Government, who generously facilitated, in various ways, my journeys in that country, to Professor R. Lehmann-Nitsche of the Museum of La Plata, who helped me with good advices and introductions, to Messrs. Leach Brothers at Esperanza, Province of Jujuy in northern Argentine, whose grand hospitality I enjoyed during my stay at the sugar factories of Esperanza, and to Messrs. Staudt & C:o in Villa Montes, Bolivia, who rendered my many excellent services while I lived among the Bolivian Toba tribes.*

An insignificant proof of my gratitude to the Argentine Government is the small collection I brought from the Choroti and presented to the Ethnographic Museum of Buenos Aires on my return from the Chaco.

I also want to express my obligation to Mr. W. Hansson, Stockholm, who kindly put at my disposal various photographs taken by him among the Argentine Tobas, and to the Artist, Mr. Eric Wasström in Helsingfors who, according to my own accurate descriptions, has sketched the Indian dances, performed at night, which are found on pages 85 and 147, as well as the Indian head found on p. 216. Miss Agnes Dawson B. Sc., has kindly revised my English manuscript and helped me to read the proofs.

Helsingfors, April, 1932.

R. K.

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Introduction.

The vast alluvial lowland commonly known under the name of *El* 131
ran Chaco, is situated in the heart of South America, being bounded 103
n the east by the rivers Paraguay and Paraná, in the west by the eastern
ordilleras of the Bolivian Andes, and in the north and south approxi-
nately by latitudes 20° and 30° South respectively. Politically this
erritory is divided between the republics Argentine, Paraguay, and
olivia, but the boundaries between Paraguay and Bolivia have
ong been uncertain owing to the fact that the interior parts of the
haco are still very little known and practically no-man's land. In fact,
orthern Chaco has up till now remained a white spot on the map of
outh America. The very name of Chaco has been much disputed, but
his question may now be regarded as definitely settled. Chaco is a
panish form of the Quichua name *chacu*, 'hunting', 'chase'. The word
as reference to the great hunting expeditions which, as we know, were
nnually arranged by the Incas, and on which thousands of Indians
vere employed as drivers. The name *chacu* was later applied to the
ndians who devoted themselves to this kind of chase, as well as to the
racts where these hunts took place. 1) The Incas, of course, only knew a
mall part of the immense territory which is now called Chaco, more
trictly speaking the forest-clad slopes of the eastern cordilleras as well
s the adjacent plains, regions which formerly were and in parts still
re extremely rich in all kinds of game. The interior regions, particular-
y east of Pilcomayo, inhabited by savage Indians, were unknown to
he Incas and were not explored until our own days.

The climate in the Gran Chaco is on the whole subtropical, but sub- 132
ect to great variations, a fact that accounts for the different character 137
f the vegetation in different parts of the country. In the west, where

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1) See Enrique de Gandia, *Historia del Gran Chaco.* Madrid, 1930, pp. 7 sqq.

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132 137 the annual rainfall is more abundant and the temperature more equable, we meet with a luxuriant vegetation and almost impenetrable virgin forests. When we pass eastwards this picture gradually changes. Open grass-covered plains dotted with fan palms (*Copernicia cerifera*), which in some places form real palm-groves, are varied by patches of arid deserts with lonely cactuses or with patches of forest, mostly composed of small and scrubby trees which sometimes seem almost impassable by man or beast. Occasionally, however, large forest trees are found. Among these the *Guayacan* (*Caesalpina melanocarpa*), the *Quebracho* (*Quebrachia Lorentzii*), and the *Palo santo* or holywood are well known as fine timber trees. Their iron-hard wood to a certain extent compensates the Chaco Indians for the complete lack of stone in their country, their most important weapons and implements being made of these 134 kinds of wood. It is a remarkable fact that in the pampas regions of the Chaco not the smallest stone can be found within an area of hundreds of square miles; the soil is entirely composed of fine-grained silt, with occasional layers of sand.

262 273 From an alimental point of view the most common and at the same time most valuable tree is the *algaroba* (*Prosopis alba or juliflora*), which forms real forests. Its pod-like fruit, which is extremely rich in sugar, is very nourishing and in fact feeds thousands of Indians for two or three months of the year. Of this fruit moreover the natives brew their favourite national drink, the algaroba beer, which plays an important part in their social and religious life. Other wild trees of great nutritive value are the *tusca* (*Acacia aroma*), the *chañar* (*Gourliea decortitans*), and the *mistol* (*Sieyphus mistol*), from which also intoxicating fermented drinks are prepared.

314 A plant which is quite common in the thickets of the Chaco and which is very useful, although extremely troublesome to the traveller because of its long thorns, is the *caraguatá* plant (*Bromelia serra*). It is from the fibres of this plant that the Indians twine the thread of which they make their shirts, bags, nets, etc. Its edible root-stocks are also useful.

132 It is the scarcity of rain that stamps the vegetation in the interior of the Chaco, just as it exerts its influence upon the culture of the natives. Thus agriculture can be practised only in a very limited degree. A real rainy season scarcely exists, but the period when rainfalls are more common than at other times of the year — from October to March — is called »summer» in the Chaco. Owing to prolonged rains in the moun-

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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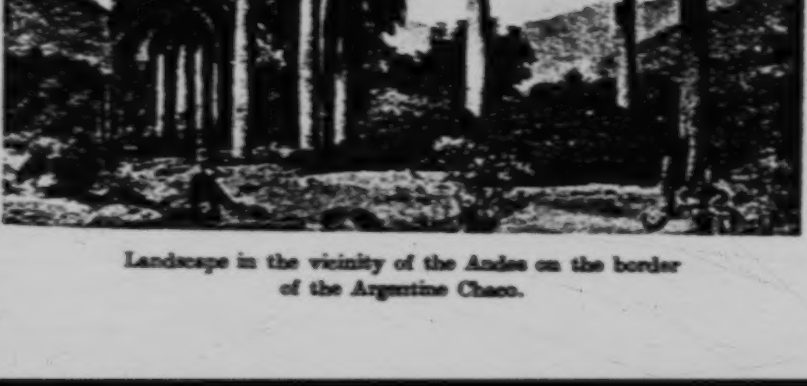
Mestizo houses in the neighbourhood of the Bolivian Andes.



Landscape in the vicinity of the Andes on the border of the Argentine Chaco.

132 tains the rivers may at that time rise to a height of twenty feet above the normal, and in low-lying tracts inundations are by no means uncommon. The temperature may then frequently rise to 110° F. in the shade. The forests abound in algaroba and other wild fruits, and the natives devote themselves to the cultivation of their modest fields of pumpkin, water melon, manioc, and maize. But at the end of March a remarkable change is noticeable. The thunderstorms accompanied by showers of rain, which during the summer time are comparatively frequent, cease from then on, and a season of drought which lasts for several months sets in. Whereas in the summer the hot north wind is prevalent, the cold south wind is the rule during the dry season, and is one of the causes of the remarkable fall of temperature then taking place. In the early hours of the morning it may fall below freezing point, and the traveller who has spent the night in his open tent may, to his astonishment, find the water pools covered with a thin layer of ice. But about noon the temperature may again, if the sun shines, rise to an almost summerlike warmth.

136 Animal life in the Chaco is much the same as in tropical South America, but shows certain characteristic forms. In the pampas regions large flocks of the South American ostrich (*Rhea americana*) are frequently seen, rapidly taking flight at the approach of a party of equestrians. The Indians eagerly hunt this shy bird both on account of its flesh, which is highly appreciated as food, and its feathers which are used as ornaments on festival occasions. On the edge of forests large troops of peccaries (*Dicotyles labiatus* and *D. torquatus*) as well as deer are frequently encountered, whereas marshy regions are haunted by the tapir (*Tapirus americanus*). Occasionally a specimen of the great anteater (*Myrmecophaga jubata*) is seen; including the long, bushy tail this peculiar animal measures about seven feet; the snout is very long and pointed and on the back it has a bristly mane; the forefeet are strongly developed and provided with terrible claws with which the animal tears up the belly of its assailant. Next to the jaguar, the anteater is the most dangerous animal in the Chaco, and the Indians allege that it is a match even for this beast.

Of the carnivora the jaguar is the most important; it is fairly common especially in the cattle districts and attains here a larger size than in any other part of South America. The animal is rarely seen, but its tracks are often encountered on the path of the forest, and at night its howling is often heard as it roams about looking for prey. The traveller

must then be on the alert and have his horses and mules well secured. 136
The settlers generally hunt the jaguar by means of hounds, of which of course a great number must be used. Badly attacked by its assailants, the beast at last seeks refuge in climbing a tree, where it is generally easily shot.

The natives stand in great fear of the jaguar, looking upon it as the 825
incarnation of an evil spirit, and the beast does in fact seem to have far less respect for the Indian than for a white man. In the religion and mythology of the Chaco Indians the jaguar plays an important part.

The puma is rare, and the same may be said of the maned wolf (*Canis* 136
jubatus) which is reported to exist in the Chaco, for I never saw or heard of any. The fox is very common on the plains, and its howling or barking is one of the characteristic sounds interrupting the silence of night. Of birds there is no great variety in the Chaco. Doves, wild turkeys, and small parrots are, in addition to ostriches, the birds most commonly seen in the pampas regions and forests. Only at the big lagoons, found here and there in the interior of the country, may one notice a rich bird-life, especially during the dry season. Ducks of different kinds, white and yellow herons, storks, and other aquatic birds in countless numbers give life to these places, whither also many animals of the forest descend to allay their thirst.

Venomous snakes, even rattlesnakes, are quite common on the plains, especially during the dry season. Both in the river Pilcomayo and in the lagoons alligators are found, although in the Argentine and Bolivian Chaco they are not as numerous as in the Rio Paraguay. The rivers moreover abound in fish, and all the Pilcomayo tribes live mainly by fishing.

Insect-life is very rich in summer-time. Different kinds of mosquitoes, crickets, large beetles, and especially the *Cicada* with its shrill whistling, shortly before sunset and at night fill the air with their weird sounds, innumerable croaking frogs joining in the concert. These manifestations of lower animal life, as they are perceived at sunset, are, I believe, the things that most impress a traveller in the Chaco.

Although mosquitoes are numerous and troublesome in the summer,
the climate is on the whole healthy. Malarial fever does not occur, except [164]
when it is occasionally introduced by settlers or other white men. Rheumatism and catarrhs are the ailments from which the natives most commonly suffer.

The scarcity of water has been the greatest obstacle to the explora- 133
tion of the Chaco. In the Bolivian Chaco the traveller preferably keeps to

133 the river Pilcomayo, following its sinuous course, and this is practically the only way known to white people hitherto. An explorer who undertook to penetrate at random into the interior of the unknown country east of the river, without being accompained by Indian guides, would be almost sure to perish from thirst within a few days. Many promising expeditions into the Chaco have ended disastrously in this way. Only the natives know where the few water places are to be found. Generally these consist of small pools, the stinking brown or green water of which seems almost undrinkable to a white man; but the explorer soon finds it good enough even for him and it will save the life both of man and beast

648 Another danger to the explorer is the hostility of the savage natives who inhabit the country. This aspect of the Chaco tribes has become almost proverbial owing to the fact that several explorers have met a disastrous end at the hands of the savage Indians. In our own days the best known of these unfortunate explorers are Crevaux, Ibareta, and Boggiani, of whom the first mentioned was killed by the Toba Indians on the banks of the Rio Pilcomayo, at the place which still bears his name. Several expeditions have tried to explore the country, following the course of the Pilcomayo down to its confluence with the Rio Paraguay, but the first which succeeded was the Bolivian expediton under D. Campos in 1883. The interior of the Chaco, however, is still to a great extent unknown, and ethnographic exploration of this interesting country did not begin until a few decades ago.

114 The above description of the Chaco has particular reference to the Argentine and Bolivian Gran Chaco and more especially to the region on both sides of the river Pilcomayo, of which I have acquired personal knowledge. My ethnological studies have in fact been limited to the most important of the tribes inhabiting that region, tribes which, when I first visited them, were very imperfectly known. The Pilcomayo is the largest of the few affluents that the great river Paraguay receives from the west. For the main part of its course the river flows through very little known country, and the tribes that have settled on its banks or roam about on the grassy plains or in the thickets of the interior still live completely — or at any rate did live at the time when I visited them — in a state of nature. The most important of these tribes are the Mataco, the Choroti, the Tobas, and the Ashluslay, who live partly on the right (Argentine), partly on the left (Bolivian) side of the river. The Mataco, the Choroti, and the Ashluslay, who linguistically are closely related to each other, form a group of their own. The Tobas, although a typical Chaco tribe, both

linguistically, anthropologically and in their whole character differ essentially from them. Their culture is undoubtedly the most important and the most interesting native culture on the Pilcomayo and in the whole Chaco. 114

000 Among the Pilcomayo tribes moreover many travellers reckon the Avas or Chiriguano[1], who inhabit a large territory between the Upper

A settler's ranch on the Bolivian side of the Pilcomayo.

Rio Pilcomayo and the river Parapiti in the north, a territory forming the western limit of the unknown Chaco boreal. The Avas, who belong to the great Guarani people, form with the Guaranized Chané a special group with many distinguishing features in their culture, and should not therefore be included among the Chaco tribes proper. In 1912 I visited the largest villages inhabited by the Avas and also made some notes

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[1] 'Chiriguano' is a nickname given to these Indians by their enemies, the Quichuas, and has never been recognised by themselves; on the contrary, they regard it as an insult. These Guarani Indians call themselves *Ava* (that is, 'men'), and this is the only name that should be used of them in literature.

000 on their customs. These Indians are now half-civilized and Christians in name, and we owe our best knowledge of their culture to the Catholic missionaries who have been active amongst them in former times. In the south the Avas have had contact with some of the Chaco tribes, especially with the Mataco, but without receiving any cultural influence from them.

114 The principal objects of my researches in the Chaco have been the Choroti and the Tobas as well as those Mataco Indians that have settled on the Bolivian side of the Pilcomayo, a tribe generally known under the name Mataco-Noctènes. Along the middle course of the river, not far from the Bolivian fort Guachalla, I also occasionally came in contact with the Ashluslay Indians, but found no opportunity to study their customs more thoroughly.

000 Before I proceed to describe the customs of the Indians visited by me, I shall give a short account of my travels in the Chaco.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

CHAPTER I.

My travels in the Gran Chaco.

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In October 1911 I arrived in Buenos Aires by an English steamer, proceeding directly from London, and a few days later continued my journey by railway to my future field of research. The Argentine government, to which I was introduced by the Russian minister in Buenos Aires, Count Maximoff, did everything to facilitate my undertaking and even offered me an escort on my journey to the Indians — an offer which however I was obliged courteously to decline. My nearest goal was the sugar factory of Esperanza, situated about three miles from the small town San Pedro in the province of Jujuy in northern Argentine. At this factory thousands of Indian labourers are employed to cut the sugar cane in the fields surrounding the village. Among these native labourers almost all Chaco tribes are represented — especially the Tobas, the Mataco and the Choroti — and there are instances of Indians arriving from the interior parts of the country where no white man has yet put his foot. Here I had an excellent opportunity of making preliminary acquaintance with the Indian tribes whom I proposed to visit later on in their own land.

M C 115

I was received with great kindness and hospitality by the owners of the sugar factory, the great English firm Leach Brothers, who helped me to get into contact with the Indians. At Esperanza I stayed for three weeks, making preparations for my expedition into the Chaco, so that it was not until in the middle of November that I could set out upon my journey. From San Pedro de Jujuy it is only a few hours railway journey to Embarcación, which at that time was the last station towards the north. From there on one could only travel on mule-back along the road which from Embarcación goes to southern Bolivia. Messrs. Leach had helped me to buy the mules at Esperanza and also got two peons to accompany me at least on the first part of my expedition.

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114 The way which leads from Embarcación up to Bolivia is what is called a *camino carretero,* a broad road suitable for big carts drawn by mules. It is illustrative of the primitive means of communication in Bolivia that nearly all articles of commerce had to be transported along this road up to such distant places as Santa Cruz de la Sierra and Mojos in the heart of Bolivia — a journey which takes months to accomplish. My own nearest goal was a place called Yacuiba, a big village which at that time belonged to Bolivia, but a few years later on was annexed by Argentine. The journey from Embarcación to Yacuiba takes seven days. Embarcación is situated on the bank of the Rio Bermejo, a tributary of the Pilcomayo, and this river had to be crossed, the mules swimming over it. Having a few hours later passed the small village Miraflores, we arrived at
114 the open plains varied with small forests which here form the westernmost
361 part of the enormous territory of the Gran Chaco. These regions are almost uninhabited; only isolated *tolderias* (villages) of the Mataco Indians are found, from which occasionally we could hear the beating of drums or the incantations of the medicine-men, when they were trying to call forth rain or to drive away evil disease-bringing spirits. The scarcity of water in fact was great, for although it was the beginning of the rainy season very little rain had as yet fallen, and at the halting-places it was generally difficult to find water for the beasts. In a place called Bomba, inhabited by a lonely settler, we had to pay for the drinking-water, which was brought from a distant pool near the cordilleras rising in the west.

114 About midway between Embarcación and Yacuiba lies the village Tartagal, which at that time only consisted of a couple of poor houses. In
133 this region nature entirely changes its aspect. The traveller, having previously marched for days through open plains and thickets, suddenly enters a virgin forest of almost tropical grandeur, where the great variety of climbers and creepers, covering not only the giant trees but also bushes and plants, especially attracts attention. This is a type of scenery which is only met with in the vicinity of the Andes, never in the interior of the Chaco. We had to march a couple of days through this interesting primeval forest before we again came out on the plains. Just north of Tartagal there is the small village Aguaray — like all villages in this region, rather a group of primitive ranches — whence it is only one day's journey to Yacuiba.

Yacuiba was formerly a place of bad repute, being a resort of criminals and adventurers of the kind so frequently met with in places far away from the centres of civilization in Argentine and Bolivia. At the

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The road leading to the village Yacuiba (visible in the background).

A settlement of mestizos and Indians in the Argentina Chaco, near Yacuiba.

114 time of my stay in Yacuiba conditions were much improved, and the village has since made considerable progress, chiefly owing to some foreign commercial houses which have established themselves there. Yacuiba has now several hundred inhabitants. among whom there is a small number of Europeans. The village became my head-quarters for the whole time that I travelled in the Chaco. One of the foreigners, Don Carlos Holzer, did me great service in helping me to get peons and to prepare for my expeditions into different parts of the country.

114 491 There are two roads leading from Yacuiba to the river Pilcomayo; the one, passing through the village of Caiza, takes the traveller to the small place called Crevaux; the other leading directly along the line at the 22nd degree of latitude to the Bolivian fort d'Orbigny. Both these places are situated close to the river, the former a few leagues to the north of the latter. On my first expedition to the Pilcomayo in November 1911 I took the second road, the one leading to d'Orbigny. From Yacuiba this place can be reached in three days, travelling on horseback. In addition to the riding-mules I had three baggage mules and was accompanied by two peons none of whom had been at the Pilcomayo before. These regions are entirely uninhabited; there are neither settlers nor Indian villages. [133] The way goes partly through deep forests, partly through arid deserts and — near the river — through grassy plains. The right (Argentine) bank of the Pilcomayo is extremely flat; it is difficult to imagine more monotonous scenery.

114 At d'Orbigny a small body of ten Bolivian soldiers commanded by a lieutenant was garrisoned and I had counted on their assistance at the crossing of the Pilcomayo, which in the rainy season is very broad and rapid. The fort, however, turned out to be situated on the opposite side of the river and was not even visible from the spot where we were. No human being could be seen on whom it would have been possible to call for assistance. At last we caught sight of two Indians who had swum over the river from the opposite bank evidently for the sake of fishing on the Argentine side where the water is lower. They were Toba Indians who knew enough Spanish to inform us that there was absolutely no canoe to be had either on this or the other side of the river, and that all must cross it by swimming, even the mules. Since the Pilcomayo at this place has a breadth of nearly one mile, it seemed by no means a trifle to cross it with the baggage and the mules. Happily the rainy season had not yet properly begun, so the river was comparatively low. The Indians offered to help us take over the beasts and for this purpose went in search

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The left (Argentine) side of the Pilcomayo, where the country is extremely flat.

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On the right (Bolivian) side the Pilcomayo in some places forms high walls (barrancas).

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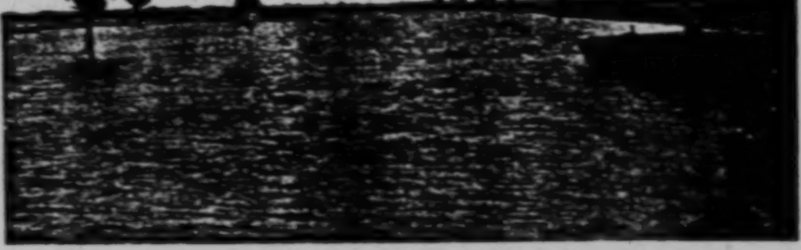
River scenery from the middle course of the Pilcomayo.



The Pilcomayo during an inundation.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

M 114 of a ford. Those Chaco Indians who live beside the river, clever swimmers as they are, possess great experience and dexterity in performing such tasks and in fact, no white traveller in the Chaco could easily do without their services. At the fordable place where we crossed to the other side the water was so low that men and animals had to swim only a short distance, our clothes being taken over in a big cow's hide folded up so as to form a sort of vessel. Within half an hour we were all safely on the other side of the river and could continue our journey.

T [101] The Bolivian sub-tribes of the great Toba nation inhabit the region between fort d'Orbigny in the south and the village Villa Montes (Mission of San Francisco), situated about twenty leagues to the north, on the left bank of the Pilcomayo. I proposed to visit these Indians later on. For the present my destination was the country of the Choroti which lies about midway between the fort d'Orbigny and the next Bolivian military station on the Pilcomayo, Guachalla. To reach the first Choroti village I had to travel about eight leagues along the narrow path which — in the main following the river but at times retiring far from it — runs from d'Orbigny in a southerly direction. This path is in some places almost obliterated, especially when it leads through the plains, and for the traveller there is the frequent risk of losing it, in which case he may easily go astray in the wilds.

C 648 It was in the beginning of December that I first made the acquaintance
of the Choroti in their own land. These Indians are now what the Bolivians call *indios mansos* (tame Indians) and there is no danger for a white
man in visiting them. The few white settlers on the Pilcomayo have very
seldom had any trouble with the Choroti, who — in contrast to the arrogant Tobas — are a peaceful people. A *kilai* (the name given every white
man) is therefore kindly received if he himself treats the Indians well
and does not arrive empty-handed. So it was with Nordenskiöld during
his stay among the Choroti, and so it was with me. It is not possible to C 574
live among the Chaco Indians without bringing articles of exchange,
and for my own part I had a good supply of such things. Among these 276
were not only shirts, needles, thread, small mirrors, glass beads etc.,
but above all tobacco which is the article most appreciated by these
Indians. Tobacco in fact is a sort of tribute which everybody must pay
who travels in the Chaco and has to deal with the natives. Every male
member of the small community whose guest I was had to receive his
share — of course only a small quantity, just enough to fill the pipe a
couple of times — and the gift had to be repeated every day. The Choroti

574 only smoke for pleasure, and I doubt whether they ever used the tobacco 276 ceremonially as is the rule among the Indians of tropical South America. [177] The custom is evidently of comparatively recent origin and has been introduced by the whites.

101 *Choroti* is a Guarani name given to our Indians by the Avas (Chiriguano) and now recognized by themselves. Their proper tribal name, however, is *Jóhuaha*[1]), a word the etymology of which is obscure but which seems to be equivalent to «our own people». Among themselves the Choroti never use any other name than Jóhuaha.

114 In the history of the Gran Chaco, a small and peaceful tribe like the *Choroti* can have played only an insignificant rôle, and the earliest European explorers seem not to have known them. The first author who mentions them is Father Lozano, S. J., who in his book of 1733 calls them Xolotas. But he tells us absolutely nothing about them, and the same may be said of several later travellers who occasionally mention them. The Swedish traveller von Rosen, who made a short visit among the Choroti in 1902, has published a small study of these Indians under the title *The Chorotes Indians of the Bolivian Chaco* (Stockholm, 1904). But v. Rosen's paper is based on very superficial observation and contains several errors which make its ethnographic value rather problematic.[2]) This may partly be due to the fact that v. Rosen never visited the Choroti in their own land on the other side of the Pilcomayo river, but only those families of the tribe which have been in the habit of living for certain periods near the village Caiza, situated just north of Yacuiba, at the easternmost cordilleras of the Andes.

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[1]) Nordenskiöld erroneously gives this name as *Yóshuahá* (*Indianerleben*, p. 28) and Hunt equally erroneously as *Yofuaha* (*El Choroti o Yofuaha*, *Revista del Museo de La Plata*. Bd. 23. Liverpool, 1915). The Indians themselves most clearly pronounce their name *Jóhuaha*, with the accent on the first syllable. The f-sound is lacking in the Choroti language, as in the languages of many other South American Indians.

[2]) Thus, when v. Rosen says that «polygamy only occurs among the rich, and the caciques have quite a number of wives», this sentence alone contains three mistakes. First, the Choroti are strictly monogamous, any form of polygamy being prohibited by their social morality and their women, who are extremely jealous; secondly, there are no «rich» people among the Choroti, all being equally rich or equally poor; and thirdly, although we may speak of caciques or chiefs among them, these have very limited power and do not distinguish themselves from the rest of the tribe in the way v. Rosen's statement seems to indicate. — Evidently v. Rosen has confounded the Choroti chiefs with those of other and more advanced tribes, probably the Avãs (Chiriguano) or the Tobas.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

In 1908 another Swedish ethnographer, Erland Nordenskiöld, lived in all for about three months among four or five of the Pilcomayo tribes, and in his popular book *Indianerleben in El Gran Chaco* (1912) has given a general account of the material culture and the daily life of these natives. For detailed and methodical studies of their social customs, religious beliefs, etc., Nordenskiöld had no time and no training, and probably very little interest, since the main object of his travels in the Gran Chaco was to make ethnographic collections for Swedish museums. It is curious that although Nordenskiöld lived on very friendly terms with the Choroti and the Ashluslay and tried in every respect to accommodate himself to their customs, he could find out nothing about their intellectual culture and religion, not even the name of their spirits. Thus for instance Nordenskiöld erroneously describes the dances of the Choroti as being purely profane, overlooking their magical or religious character, which of course gives them their chief interest. As to the Tobas, the most important of the Chaco tribes, Nordenskiöld did not visit them at all.

C 114

The English missionary Rickhard J. Hunt, who visited the Choroti after I had left the Chaco, has chiefly studied their language.

M 114

My own task was to complete Nordenskiöld's general account of the material culture of the Chaco tribes with as detailed studies of their customs and intellectual culture as possible. For this purpose I stayed about eight months among the Choroti, after which I settled down among the Tobas, making also occasional visits to some Mataco tribes which were culturally closely related to the Tobas. My studies were rendered particularly difficult by the fact that neither the Choroti nor the Tobas speak Spanish, while interpreters were impossible to obtain. I had to pick up both languages gradually, which of course meant a considerable waste of time since language to me could only be a medium for the study of native culture and was not in itself the object of my studies. It was not until the end of my stay among the Choroti that I met some Indians who could speak a little Spanish. Another thing which, in its way, hampered my studies of the Choroti was the difficulty of getting provisions during the dry season, when the natives themselves are often brought to the very verge of starvation. Since the river was as yet too swollen to allow me to cross it for the purpose of returning to Yacuiba, I myself had similar difficulties until at last I got some provisions from one of the few settlers living on the Pilcomayo.

Owing to these circumstances the material collected by me among the

M 114 Choroti and Toba Indians is not so rich as I wished it to be, nor have I been able to realize my plan of returning later to Chaco for the sake of completing it. My next great expedition took me to the Indians of the Amazon territory. However, I think the new facts I have been able to gather relating to their general sociology, their customs and beliefs, magic dances, etc., form an important contribution to our knowledge of the intellectual culture of the Chaco Indians, so strangely neglected by earlier ethnographical travellers. In fact, the dances of the South American Indians have never before been the object of detailed studies. The Chaco culture has in many respects a character of its own, differing markedly, for instance, from the cultures peculiar to the tropical virgin forests in northern South America. Taken as a whole it is much poorer; neither the material nor the intellectual culture in these inhospitable regions has attained the same stage of development as in the regions better endowed by nature. Even the rites and ceremonies in which religious life finds expression among the Chaco Indians are comparatively few.

C 619 361 The Choroti are split up into three minor tribes which are settled in different parts of the territory occupied by these Indians. One of these sub-tribes lives on the left bank of the Pilcomayo just in latitude 22° S. and a few leagues to the north of it. Their chief at the time when I lived among them was Toula. A second sub-tribe lives about ten leagues east of them in the interior of the country. In March 1912 I undertook an expedition to these Indians, who had never before been visited by a European. Two Choroti Indians accompanied me as guides, and without them it would have been impossible to find one's way through this maze of shrublike forest land, broken here and there by small open plains. Whereas the country adjacent to the great water source Pilcomayo is fairly fertile, the soil in the interior is too dry and sandy to be suitable for cultivation. Agriculture is practised by the Choroti of the interior on a still more modest scale than by the river Indians, and since they are poor hunters their life must be extremely hard at those periods of the year when there are no wild fruits. These Choroti, like the rest, live in small communities and their total number does not exceed a few hundreds. Their chief at that time was a comparatively young man called Anempa.

The third and largest Choroti tribe is found within a few leagues of Fortín Guachalla, the Bolivian military settlement mentioned before. These Indians only live on the banks of the river during the dry season, when the scarcity of water renders life in the interior impossible. The

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necessity of fishing also at that time compels them to stay near the river. 619
But as soon as the rainy season sets in and the algaroba, tusca, and other 361
fruits begin to ripen, the Indians take up their abode in the forest close by some small lagoon or a rare water-hole several leagues from the river, spending most of their »summer» time in drinking algaroba beer, feasting, and dancing. The Indians of the Guachalla region form the main bulk of the Choroti tribe and number about a thousand individuals. Their immediate neighbours in the south are the Ashluslay, to whom the Choroti [648] are closely related in their culture. There is much communication between the two tribes and intermarriage is frequent. Thus the chief of the Choroti, the old Ātamo, was on his father's side of Ashluslay descent, but since mother-right prevails among the Chaco Indians, he had become a member [611] of the Choroti tribe.

There seems to be a certain antagonism between the different Choroti 619
tribes, in consequence of which they have very little intercourse with one
another. I particularly noticed such an antagonism between those Choroti 184
who live on the river and those living in the interior. It would have been impossible for me to get a guide among the people of the chief Toula to accompany me to Anempā's tribe. Since to these Indians, who in general live to a great extent by fishing, the possession of the river is of great importance, I suppose it is originally due to this enmity that some Choroti Indians have settled in the inhospitable regions in the interior where they are found to-day. These latter even speak a somewhat different [197] dialect of the Choroti language. Thus, one of the commonest words in the language, the word for 'house', is in the dialect of the river Indians *ak*, in the dialect of the inland Indians again *séwo*.

The Choroti living on the river call the Choroti tribe inhabiting the interior of the Chaco *Asóoa*.

The total number of the Choroti I estimate at about 2,000 or a [161]
little more.[1]) The surrounding tribes are much larger. Of these I have 648
already mentioned the southern neighbours of the Choroti, the Ashluslay, whom the Choroti call *Akle*. Their neighbours in the north are the Tobas, whom they call *Johlöki*, and another Chaco tribe, the Tapiete, whom they call *Ohuénik*. Their neighbours in the west again are the Mataco, whom the Choroti call *Hotenák*. They have dealings with all these tribes, although at times they have been at war with them, or at

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[1]) Consequently, when Nordenskiöld estimates the Choroti at 4,000 individuals, this is a great exaggeration.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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Choroti SK6

C 648 least with the Mataco. The Choroti also very much fear the powerful and ferocious Tobas and do not like to pass through their country.

M 114 Having finished my studies of the Choroti Indians, I left at the beginning of April for Yacuiba to prepare for my next Chaco expedition, when I proposed to visit the Tobas. Since I could not cross the river which was still swollen by the rains, I decided to return to Yacuiba through the village of Villa Montes (Mission of San Francisco), situated about thirty leagues to the north of d'Orbigny, on the bank of the Pilcomayo. From this village it is a journey of nearly three days to Yacuiba. A narrow riding-path, which in the main follows the course of the river, takes the traveller up to Villa Montes through the dense forests bordering the banks of the Pilcomayo in this region. The typical Chaco scenery disappears as one approaches the cordilleras. The village itself is situated on the very border of the Chaco, at the point where the Pilcomayo leaves the mountains.

M 114 484 A journey like this is very difficult and even dangerous during the rainy season. In many places the primitive riding-path had been completely destroyed by the strong current of the swollen river. Every now and then large pieces of the river bank were detached and plunged into the water with a tremendous rumble, carrying with them giant trees and bushes. In such places the traveller had to cut a new path through the thickets of the virgin forest for himself and his horse, which of course was often connected with great difficulties. It is easy to understand that in this way the Pilcomayo has undergone considerable changes in the course of time. As is shown by old river-beds, the river has several times even taken another course.

T 114 These regions are inhabited mainly by Toba Indians, and on my journey to Villa Montes I passed through some of their villages. Since these Tobas are comparatively easy of access, I decided to stay among them on my second Chaco expedition.

In Yacuiba I was obliged to stay for more than one month, so it was not until the middle of May that I could again leave for the Chaco. Passing through the little village of Caiza to Villa Montes, which became my head-quarters for the next six months, I settled in a Toba village about eight leagues to the south of this place, visiting later on the more distant Toba tribes. Although the Tobas have had a bad reputation — among other things these savages killed the explorer Crevaux — I was received by them in quite a friendly manner. In regard to the language, I had in the beginning the same difficulties as among the Choroti. The two

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The river Pilcomayo, seen from the village Villa Montes (San Francisco).

Pilcomayo where it leaves the mountains near Villa Montes.
The mules are being taken over the river by Indians.

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A landscape characteristic of the Chaco on the middle course af the Pilcomayo: grassy plains varying with patches of shrubby forest and palm groves.

COC

A Bolivian fort on the middle course of the Pilcomayo.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
Toba SI12

languages are entirely different, and it was not at first possible to find 114
a Toba Indian who could speak Spanish. Later on I found some Indian
interpreters and moreover learnt to speak the language tolerably well
myself.

The Tobas are the largest and most important tribe, not only of 101
those living on the Pilcomayo, but of the Chaco tribes in general. The 648
Indians among whom I had settled form the northernmost tribe of the
Tobas and are the only ones living in Bolivia. These Tobas have dealings
with the Avas in the north and with the Mataco-Nocténes in the east,
and many of them speak or understand Guarani. In my estimation [161]
they only number about 1,500.

As to the other Tobas, another and larger tribe is settled on the right 619
(Argentine) side of the Pilcomayo, approximately between latitudes 23°
and 24° S. These Indians are the same as those known in literature under 184
the name of Pilagá (Pitilagá) and they have the same culture and speak
about the same dialect as the Bolivian Tobas. They are quite numerous; [161]
the great Toba chief Taycolique, whose acquaintance I made in the
Bolivian Chaco, estimated them at about three or four thousand individuals.
On the lower Pilcomayo these Pilagá are neighbours to a
third tribe of the Tobas which occupies the region southwards from the
province of Formosa almost to the Paraguay river. In the dialect
which they speak and in some of their customs, they differ considerably
from the rest. They are still more numerous than the Pilagá; the
chief Taycolique put their number at ten thousand, which however may
be an exaggeration. Boggiani, in his *Compendio de etnografía Paraguaya* 114
moderna, speaking of the Tobas, describes mainly this tribe, of which
some call themselves *Toba-michi*, »the little Tobas«. The Tobas which
Dr. Lehmann-Nitsche had an opportunity to study anthropologically in
Buenos Aires in 1899 and who called themselves Takshik were evidently
also of the same tribe. I myself met these Takshik at the sugar factories
of Esperanza in 1911, and they told me that they speak quite a different
dialect from the one spoken by the Pilagá and the other Tobas.

In 1920 the Argentine Tobas in the region of Formosa were visited by a Swedish expedition, the photographer of which, Mr. W. Hansson, has kindly placed at my disposal several of the photographs taken by him among these Indians.

This is all we know about the Tobas of the present day. A few words may be added as to the history of these Indians. Although they have been known by name for many centuries and have frequently had both

114 friendly and hostile intercourse with the whites, comparatively little
has been known of them down to our own days. Very frequently the
Tobas have been confused with other Argentine or Paraguayan tribes —
a fact easily explained by the extremely vagrant life of these savages
and the many sub-tribes into which they have been divided. Many dif-
114 ferent names have been given them; formerly the Spaniards called them
101 *Frentones* — owing to the peculiar way in which they used to shave
off the hair of the head — the Quichua-speaking peoples in the region
of Tucumán again called them *Juries*. In our own time we meet in
ethnological literature — besides the name Toba — others, such as
Mocobís, *Natokóit*, *Pilagá*, *Takshik*, etc. The Tobas visited by me called
themselves *Komlék*, which simply means »our own people«, *komi* being in
the Toba language the possessive form of the first person plural, and *lek*
a suffix which occurs in nearly all Toba words denoting kind of people.

Of all these Indians we now know that they merely form sub-tribes
619 of one and the same Toba people and that they belong to a great group
147 of Chaco Indians called *Guaycurú*, among whom we also have to reckon
the ancient *Abipones* described by the Jesuit Father Dobrizhoffer[1]). The
name Guaycurú, accordingly, does not denote any particular tribe but
is a generic term. The languages spoken by all these tribes seem to be
merely dialects of one and the same principal language.

174 The former geographical diffusion of the Tobas is uncertain owing to their nomadic habits. Even their original home is not known with certainty. The only thing we know is that for many centuries they have roamed the vast plains between the rivers Salado and Paraguay in southern and central Gran Chaco of the republics Argentine and Bolivia. The fact that their original home was in the frigid pampas regions of the south, may be inferred from one of their myths which tells of the destruction of the world by snow and ice.

114 Although the name of the Tobas is frequently met in anthropological literature, the previous information about them is scanty and incomplete. Many travellers have formerly, as in our own days, described their physical characteristics and their material culture, but their social customs have been too superficially studied, and of their religion and superstition scarcely anything is known.

The first author to speak of the Tobas was probably Father Lozano,

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[1]) Dobrizhoffer. (Martin). *Geschichte der Abiponer*. 3 Bde. Vien. 1783—84.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 S17 Mataco
Toba SI/2

S. J., when he describes the Frentones of the region of Tucumán [1]). That 114 these Frentones were Tobas appears clearly from the few notes the Father gives about them, describing their tall build, their ferocious and warlike character, their way of painting themselves, etc. At the end of the same century they were visited by the naturalist and traveller Azara, who however, in his *Voyages dans l'Amérique méridionale* treats of their customs in purely negative terms: »Ils ne connaissent non plus ni divinité, ni religion, ni culte, ni chefs, ni lois obligatoires» [2]). Azara in this fell into the same error as many other passing travellers; not being able to learn anything about the customs of the natives, he assumed that they had no customs at all. The same in part holds true of d'Orbigny. In his *l'Homme Américain* he describes the mental characteristics as well as the industrial art of the Tobas in detail, but as to their social life he does not add much to our knowledge. Of their religion he merely states that »leurs croyances religieuses sont bornées», and in fact, almost the only thing he tells about them in this respect is that they believe in a future life, which he infers from their custom of interring their dead with their whole property. [3])

The Bolivian explorer D. Campos who in 1883, following the river Pilcomayo, passed through the whole territory inhabited by the Tobas, incidentally gives some data concerning these Indians [4]). But our present knowledge of the Tobas we chiefly owe to Father Cardús, who in his book *Las misiones franciscanas entre los infieles de Bolivia* describes various native tribes of the Gran Chaco. What he tells us about the material culture, marriages, feasts, wars, etc. of the Tobas is of great interest, even though — in conformity with the majority of the Christian missionaries — he displays a special interest in their superstitious and cruel customs. As to their religious ideas and practices, however, he gives no information, considering the study of these things useless. The moral character of the Tobas the Father, like most other writers, depicts in very dark colours. [5])

Boggiani's small treatise on the Tobas in *Compendio de etnografia Para-*

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[1]) Losano, *Historia de Compañia de Jesús en la provincia de Paraguay.* Madrid, 1754, I. 98 sqq.

[2]) Azara, *Voyages dans l'Amérique méridionale.* Paris, 1809. 4 vols. II. 163.

[3]) d'Orbigny, *L'homme Américain* (*Voyages dans l'Amérique méridionale.* Tome IV). Paris 1843. p. 232.

[4]) Campos, *De Tarija a la Asunción*, Buenos Aires, 1888, pp. 250—257.

[5]) Cardús, *Las misiones franciscanas entre los infieles de Bolivia.* Barcelona, 1886, pp. 258 sqq.

T 114 *guaya moderna* is essentially a compilation founded on the works of Campos, Cardús, and other writers [1]). The same holds true of the monograph of Father Ducci which, besides, only deals with one sub-tribe of the Tobas on the lower Pilcomayo. [2])

The ethnological studies of the Toba tribe contained in this book mainly refer, as appears from my previous statements, to the Bolivian Tobas, but also to the Toba Pilagá of Argentine. I met the latter at the sugar factories of Esperanza in June 1912, and moreover, some of my Indian informants in Bolivia were from Argentine or had lived among their kinsmen there. The general culture of the Pilagá, as already pointed out, is much the same as that of the Bolivian Tobas, although on the whole they seem to have preserved their old customs better than the latter.

M 619 The third tribe visited by me were the *Mataco*. Next to the Tobas, the Mataco form the largest of the Argentine Chaco tribes, but only a part of them may still be said to live in a state of nature. Three principal Mataco tribes can be distinguished. One of them inhabits the corner in northern Argentine roughly limited by Tartagal in the west and Rio Bermejo — an affluent of the Pilcomayo — in the south. These Mataco are called Vejós and are those most strongly influenced by civilization. The second tribe, known under the name of Mataco-Guisnay, lives on the right bank of the Pilcomayo about ten leagues south of Fortín Guachalla. The third tribe, called Mataco-Noctenes — occupies the great triangle roughly formed by lines connecting the villages Yacuiba, Villa Montes, and Crevaux. Those Noctenes who live on the right bank of the Pilcomayo, between Villa Montes and Crevaux, have preserved their original culture best. Among these Indians I spent about one month in October M 648 197 and November 1912. They are culturally closely related to the Tobas living on the other side of the river, and intermarriage between the two tribes is frequent. Still the Noctenes speak their own language which, apart from certain dialectal differences, is the same as that spoken by the Vejós and the Guisnay. The Mataco language shows great affinity to the Choroti language which justifies us in referring both tribes to one and the same principal group. A third Chaco tribe of the same group are probably the Ashluslay, the language of which is unfortunately so far quite unknown to us.

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[1]) Boggiani, *Compendio de etnografía Paraguaya moderna.* Asunción, 1900.

[2]) Fray Zacarias Ducci, *Los Tobas de Taccagolé con arte y vocabulario Toba-castellano.* Buenos Aires, 1904.

The classical work on the Mataco Indians, in fact almost the only work dealing with the culture of these Indians at some length, is the one published by the Italian engineer Pelleschi, *Los indios Matacos y su lengua*, a monograph forming part of the larger work by the same author *Otto mesi nel Gran Ciacco*. Firenze, 1881. Pelleschi's account of the customs and beliefs of the Mataco, however, is neither systematic nor complete. During my stay among the Mataco-Nocténes I succeeded in collecting a great many new facts especially as regards their religion, and these new facts are published in this book. I may add that — apart from a certain cultural influence exerted upon the Nocténes by their neighbours, the Toba Indians — their customs and beliefs seem to be much the same as those of the other Mataco tribes.[1]

Since the Chaco Indians, at any rate the tribes of the Pilcomayo, have many essential features in common, I shall in this book treat of their cultures in connection with one another, taking care however to point out every time whether the particular custom or idea dealt with has been found among the Tobas, the Mataco, or the Choroti.

The following works have hitherto been published by me on the customs of the Chaco Indians.

La Religion de los Indios Mataco-Nocténes de Bolivia Anales del Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Buenos Aires. Tomo XXIV, 1913.

The Couvade or Male Child-bed among the South American Indians (*Öfversigt af Finska Vetenskaps-Societetens Förhandlingar.* Bd LVII. Helsingfors, 1915.

Indian Dances in the Gran Chaco (*Öfversigt af Finska Vetenskaps-Societetens Förhandlingar.* Bd. LVII. Helsingfors, 1915.

Beiträge zur Sittengeschichte der Südamerikanischen Indianer (*Acta Academiae Aboënsis.* Humaniora. Abo, 1920).

The Toba Indians of the Bolivian Gran Chaco (*Acta Academiae Aboënsis.* Humaniora. Abo, 1923).

A great many facts concerning the Chaco Indians are also contained in my work *The Civilization of the South American Indians* (London & New York, 1926).

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[1] As to the history of the Chaco tribes, see the important work by Ludwig Kersten, *Die Indianerstämme des Gran Chaco bis zum Ausgange des 18 Jahrhunderts. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Ethnographie Südamerikas* (*Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie* XVII. Leiden, 1905).

CHAPTER II.

General characteristics and material culture.

C M In their physical characteristics the *Choroti* and the *Mataco* show 141 the same affinity as appears in their languages. Both of them are strongly built and of middle height, the Mataco somewhat taller than the Choroti. 142 The average height of the former seems to be about 163 or 164 cm. for the men and 154 or 155 cm. for the women; of the latter about 162 or 163 cm. for the men and 152 or 153 cm. for the women. In their sturdy appearance M [174] the Mataco resemble the mountain Indians, and in former times there has probably been intermarriage between them and the Quichuas. The hair of both tribes is black, coarse and straggling and is worn long by both men and women, except when it is temporarily cut short for ceremonial reasons. The eyes are dark-brown, the nose somewhat flattened, and the features of the face generally irregular, especially among the Mataco. C M [304] Both tribes know the custom of tattooing the face, the women being always tattooed, the men only in some cases, and never as completely as the women.

T I need not dwell upon the physical characteristics of the *Tobas* since 142 they have been described by nearly all authors ever since Lozano. They certainly form an easily recognisable type of Indian, differing considerably 114 from the rest of the Chaco tribes, one salient feature being their remarkably tall and strong build of body. The Tobas are in fact among the tallest of all South American Indians, being in this respect comparable with the ancient Patagonians, to whom they were probably related, as well as with the present Ona Indians of the mainland of Tierra del Fuego. The physical anthropology of the Tobas, just as that of the Mataco and the Choroti, has been studied scientifically by the German anthropologist Dr. Lehmann-Nitsche.[1]

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[1] Lehmann-Nitsche, R. *Estudios antropológicos sobre los Chiriguanos, Chorotes, Matacos y Tobas* (*Anales del Museo de La Plata.* Buenos Aires, 1908).

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12
Choroti SK 7

C 181 In disposition the three tribes show great differences. The *Choroti* are pleasant and cheerful, and display to a high degree that humorous spirit which is often characteristic of the Indian even when he looks serious. They are lazy and carefree and love amusement, feasting, dancing, and games above everything. When the Choroti Indian has plenty of food and algaroba beer for the moment, he makes merry and eats and drinks as much as he can, but has no thought for the morrow and does not store provisions like the more advanced Chaco tribes. This particularly holds true of the men; the women, who in general are more industrious, show more forethought in this respect, collecting wild fruits in great quantities [251] when they are in season, and keeping the seed-corn till the following sowing. But on the whole poverty is an outstanding feature of the material culture of the Choroti, and this is no doubt due to a great extent to their own character.

C 181 727 648 The Choroti are — at least nowadays — a peaceful people, and in the insignificant wars they have sometimes waged with the Mataco on the other side of the river, they have manifested very little organization or discipline. As I was told by settlers on the Pilcomayo, the Choroti were formerly more warlike, and like other Chaco tribes, they were even in the habit of scalping those enemies whom they killed during their raids.

M 181 The *Mataco*, although anthropologically closely related to the Choroti differ from them considerably in character. The Mataco Indian is serious, taciturn, and gloomy, and in consequence more addicted to religion and superstition than his brother the Choroti Indian. At least nowadays, when the Indians are strongly influenced by European civilization, the M [515] Mataco Indian will not make a reliable servant and companion. Cleanliness is not a particular characteristic of the Choroti, but the Mataco are probably the dirtiest of all Chaco tribes. This too may in part be a consequence of their contact with the whites. On the other hand, the Mataco are more industrious and energetic than the Choroti, and accordingly, in their wars, have proved more valiant and capable of more organization than their primitive neighbours. In these respects the Mataco, at any rate the Bolivian tribes, resemble their neighbours the Tobas more than the Choroti.

T 181 As to the *Tobas*, their moral qualities and disposition have been described with much unanimity by many travellers. Nearly all have characterized them as bad, ferocious, treacherous, thievish, *etc.*, qualities which they have especially displayed towards the whites. Typical on

181 this point is the description of Father Cardús, from which the following passage may be quoted:

»The Toba has a lively, daring, and suspicious look. He is treacherous and lies like other Indians, but he is more skilled in dissimulating his feelings, he gives himself the appearance of being calm, he is open and frank in his manners, he speaks with ease and without fear. He is vivacious, cunning, proud, valiant, bold, and ferocious. Even his language [195] seems to be invented exclusively for his serious and arrogant character, and in his mode of speech he is always imperative and haughty.

»The Tobas entertain an implacable hatred against the whites, and partly for the sake of revenge, partly from custom, they have, up to this day, done them all the harm they have been able to do them.»[1])

6-8 609 This descriptive account is in the main correct, but somewhat incomplete. It is true that the Tobas are nowadays less savage than they were formerly, but their character is at bottom the same and must needs reveal itself to one who lives among them for a long time. If the Tobas have proved bad and treacherous to the whites, this is because they have looked upon the latter as their natural enemies, from whom, with much reason, they have expected nothing good. This also is the reason why as a rule they have done them »all the harm they have been able to do them». However, from this rule there are exceptions. Thus Dr. Campos mentions the extremely valuable aid that was given him by the wild Tobas during his difficult expedition from Tarija to Asunción along the river Pilcomayo, and he confesses that without the assistance of the Indians he would never have come through. When the Tobas have conceived friendship towards a white man and given up their natural distrust, they will often display qualities quite contrary to those just mentioned. They may on closer acquaintance prove good-hearted, helpful, and hospitable, nay, even give proof of a tact which one would hardly expect from a savage people.

797 The distrust which the Tobas feel towards the whites is also the main reason why they have never been converted to Christianity. All endeavours of the Catholic Fathers to christianize them have been futile, and the Mission of San Francisco, founded in 1860, only existed till 1873, 177 when it was given up. Like many other South American tribes the Tobas have tried to conserve their independence till the last, perhaps knowing sufficiently well the benefits of the Christian civilization. In spite of

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[1]) Cardús, *Las misiones Franciscanas*, p. 259.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

this they have gradually become more civilized, and in the same degree, of course, their culture has undergone changes and modifications. T 177

The material culture of uncivilized peoples can, at least in its essential aspects, be studied even by amateurs and travellers who stay among them only for a short time. Since this side of the culture of the Pilcomayo tribes, more particularly of the Choroti and the Ashlualay, has been described by Nordenskiöld, I need not dwell long upon it here. However — as I believe to have adequately shown in my *Civilization of the South American Indians* — the material culture of a savage people can never be properly studied isolated from its intellectual culture. The extremely superficial view Nordenskiöld takes of Indian culture in general cannot fail to show itself in his treatment of the ergology of the Indians, just as it shows itself for instance in his erroneous view of their dances and games. In the way in which the Indians manufacture and use their weapons and implements, their ornaments, the instruments connected with their religious ceremonies etc., their whole mentality finds expression, and no ethnographer disregarding the psychology of the Indians and their »superstitions» therefore is likely to give a really scientific account even of their material culture [1]). But a real insight into the mentality of an uncivilized people of course makes a prolonged stay among that people necessary. M 114

Since the material culture of a people is always to a great extent dependent on natural conditions, it is easy to understand for instance that in dress and ornaments, in the methods of constructing the houses, in agriculture, industry, and the general mode of life a great homogeneity is to be found between the different Chaco tribes. In a subtropical land like the Chaco, where the weather is often very hot, 000

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[1]) It is characteristic on this point that Nordenskiöld for instance calls the drums, rattle gourds, whistles, etc. of the Pilcomayo Indians »musical instruments», entirely ignoring the fact that these objects — as also the bull-roarers, which to Nordenskiöld are simply »play-things» — have a purely magic significance. (»The Choroti and the Ashlualay possess a good many musical instruments», etc., *An Ethno-Geographical Analysis of the Material Culture of Two Indian Tribes*, 1919, p. 164). I wish to point out that these tribes do not in fact possess *a single* musical instrument since, as conceived by the Indians, the said objects have absolutely nothing to do with »music» in the sense of the word familiar to us. I should presume that the first thing an ethnographer, dealing with the material culture of a savage people, has to observe is to name their objects by their right names and not to give them names suggested by a certain similarity they may have to objects known to civilized peoples.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12
Choroti SK.6

T M C 291 In subtropical land like the Chaco, where the weather is often very hot especially during the summer-times, dress is naturally of the most simple kind. Both among the Mataco, the Choroti, and the Tobas, the most important article of the man's clothing is a small cotton waist-cloth which serves as a covering and protection for the genitals. In addition to this waist-cloth the Mataco and the Choroti formerly wore a kind of broad fringed leather-belt round the loins, whereas the Tobas covered the genitals with a small apron of skin or stuff. C T M [322] The rest of the body is among all the tribes generally kept entirely naked or is only covered by the usual necklaces and other ornaments, or by red *urucú*-painting. When the weather is cold, and on festival occasions, the men also wear big woollen blankets with interwoven linear patterns mostly in red colour. C [171] The blankets of the Lenguas and other tribes in eastern Chaco often show designs denoting venomous snakes etc., but such patterns are unknown to the Choroti, and where they are found they have originally been obtained from the interior of the country. Weaving is among all Chaco tribes exclusively a work incumbent on the women.

C 291 The Choroti man adjusts his blanket in different ways. In cold or wet weather it is wrapped round the body so as to cover one or both shoulders; when it is hot, he allows it to fall in a double fold from his waist, where it is either fastened by a belt or by tucking the folds of one corner into the other.

The usual clothing of the women is a short cotton petticoat reaching from the waist to a little below the knees, the upper part of the body remaining unclothed. This petticoat formerly consisted of deer or nutria skins sewn together, but since the present-day Choroti are poor hunters C [171] such skin loin-clothes are now rarely seen. According to Mr. Hunt, young Choroti girls have nowadays adopted the female dress of the Chiriguano (Avas), a kind of sleeveless, waistless gown caught at the shoulders with a couple of safety pins and known under the name of *tipoy*. T [291] At the time when I travelled in the Chaco these *tipoys* were only known to the women among the Bolivian Tobas, but not to the Choroti women, who always kept the upper part of their body uncovered and, in opposition to the Toba women, never showed any shame at displaying their bare breasts. C [301] A few necklaces, beads, or twisted feathers replace clothing on these nude parts of the body. Many of the personal ornaments of both men and women have the character of amulets or charms and will therefore be dealt with later on in connection with the religion of the natives.

T M 291 Much the same may be said of the dress of the Mataco and the Tobas. Both of these tribes, and especially the Mataco, have been influenced

M 342 against rain and wind. In these huts the Chaco Indian spends most of his time, sitting or lying on the ground or on the goat or sheep skin which forms his most important personal property. In the daytime, however, if the weather is fine, he prefers to stay outside the house engaged in various occupations or in eating or drinking, and in the summer time when no rain is falling and the temperature is high, he frequently even passes the night in the open air.

M T 342 177 Whereas primitive huts of this type are still customary among the Pilagá and other Argentine Tobas as well as among distant Mataco tribes, the Mataco and Tobas on the Bolivian side nowadays make houses of the same form as the whites, constructed of beams or balks with walls of cane and roofs of twigs and grass. Still these houses are so badly built that it is no rare thing to see a passing whirlwind sweep off the roofs and damage the walls.

C M 361 A Choroti or a Mataco village consists of six to twelve huts, generally arranged in a circle round an open space which serves as a field for games and as a tethering place for the small flocks of sheep and goats possessed by the Indians. In the middle of this space there is usually a shady algaroba tree under which the men of the village assemble for deliberations and where the drinking-bouts take place. In building their settlements the Indians first of all make sure of the existence of water in the neighbourhood, be it the river Pilcomayo itself or one of those insignificant pools which are found here and there in the interior of the Chaco; secondly, the place must offer the necessary pasture for their flocks; and thirdly, the Indians always settle in the vicinity of a forest where they can find plenty of the wild fruits on which they to a great extent subsist, and the trees of which offer some protection against the burning rays of the sun during the hottest hours of the day. Further, being anti-social and shy, the Indians preferably chose for their settlements a place hidden away from the main track. Seldom or never are they found close to the banks of a river; generally one has to travel one or a few miles into the interior to find their villages.

C M T 361 The villages of the Tobas and the Ashluslay are generally larger than those of the Choroti and the Mataco because the tribes are larger, but they are arranged on the same principles. All Chaco tribes live in village communities — this is a feature which differentiates these tribes from those of the tropical virgin forests. The vast pampas regions, of course, favour the rise of larger societies, whereas in the great virgin forests the different families necessarily liwe scattered.

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The entrance to the village of the Choroti chief Esteikua («Wild Turkey»).

A Choroti village deserted on account of an epidemic.

361 181 In Chaco, both the primitive methods of constructing the houses and the peculiar character of the social life must to a great deal be explained by the fact that the Chaco Indians are nomads, unable to remain long in any one place and driven by resistless forces from one part of the country to another. Both their enemies, partly other Indian tribes, partly men of an altogether different race, and nature itself have always compelled them to live a nomadic life. It is a well known fact that the interior of the Chaco has for many centuries been a place of refuge for savage tribes driven to these inhospitable regions against their own will, under the pressure of superior forces. Still more do natural conditions force the Indians to wander: vast inundations at certain seasons, complete lack of water at others, and a variety of considerations arising from the necessity of obtaining a livelihood. When pasture or game is getting scarce in one place, the Indans change their abode and move to another place where it is easier to feed their flocks and to eke out their store of food by hunting. Agriculture, although practised to a very limited extent, may also at times compel the Chaco Indians to seek new dwelling-places. But — as Mr. Grubb rightly observes with special reference to the Lenguas of Paraguay — the Chaco Indian is often driven to forsake home and friends merely by his restless spirit, »the result of generations of hard and peculiar circumstances fixing a habit upon him which becomes second nature». The mere desire to wander and to get a change, or perhaps to see relatives and friends living in another part of the country, may induce an Indian to abandon his house and to move away with his wife and children and his whole property. Superstition works in the same direction. When a death occurs in a house, that house is as a general rule destroyed and burnt, and if an epidemic causes several deaths within a short time, the whole village is destroyed and thereafter abandoned by its inhabitants. The Indians cannot persuade themselves to continue living in a place which is evidently haunted by evil spirits.

361 648 Distant savage Chaco tribes have been in the habit of abandoning and destroying their villages after they have been visited by white men. In some cases the Indians, as soon as they have got to know through their spies that a party of white men are approaching, have burnt their villages and retired to the interior, unexplored parts of the country. Both Nordenskiöld and other travellers have noted with astonishment this custom of the Chaco tribes. Its true motives are to be sought partly in a natural fear of the whites, of whom the Indians have frequently had sad experience, but above all in superstitious dread of the mysterious disease-spirits

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

which the strangers are believed to bring with them. The whole place, 361 according to the idea of the Indians, has become infected as it were by 648 the new-comers. Besides, the Indians understand that one party of white men is soon followed by another.

It is natural that the Chaco Indians should not care to bestow great 342 labour on dwellings which in all probability will house them only for a short time, or in general, to arrange their life more comfortably in a place which they will probably soon be obliged to desert for ever. Apart from this, the Chaco Indian, who is perfectly suited to his environment, constructs his houses precisely in the way he thinks is most practical and of the material which is most easily obtainable. In the interior parts of the Chaco there are no large trees affording material for the construction of more substantial and durable houses. On the other hand, the scraggy trees and bushes in which the Chaco forests abound and the grassy plains provide building material in abundance, always within reach and excellent for the needs of the Indians. The beehive shaped huts of the primitive Chaco tribes therefore do not, as a certain ethnological school asserts, represent a type of human dwelling essentially characteristic of tribes at the lowest stages of cultural development, but must be wholly explained by the natural conditions. Like the Fuegians, who in their general culture are closely related to the Chaco tribes, the latter are not, on the whole, any lower in the scale of human development than most other tribes in tropical or sub-tropical South America, although nature may allow these to construct habitations of a higher type.

The same reasoning evidently accounts for the fact that the Pilcomayo 501 tribes, although they are dependent on the river and to a great extent subsist by fishing, do not use canoes or craft of any kind. Whereas dug-outs of the kind customary among the South American Indians are commonly used by the Lenguas and other tribes of the river Paraguay, the Choroti, Mataco, Tobas, and Ashluslay have not even thought of constructing such vessels, obviously because the large timber trees from which canoes could be dug out are not obtainable in their country.

I have mentioned that agriculture is only practised by the Chaco 241 tribes on a very limited scale, which of course is due to the dryness of the climate. Among all tribes the land is common property, and within this [423] territory each family has a small plot of land allotted to it, or once taken possession of, which they are supposed to possess as long as they actually cultivate it. Pumpkin, *santia* (water melon), and beans are the principal crops of the Choroti; maize and manioc are also cultivated, but the drought

M 241 seldom allows them to reach maturity. Besides the drought, birds, ants, locusts, and rats often destroy the crops. The same fruits and cereals are cultivated by the Mataco and the Tobas in Bolivia, maize and manioc however with greater success than among the Choroti, since the climate there is more favourable. On the whole, the Chaco tribes are greatly dependent for their subsistence on the crops nature spontaneously gives them, and the great rôle that wild fruits like the algaroba, the chañar, the tusca, and a few others play in the economic life of these Indians has already been mentioned. It is mainly owing to these useful trees that the interior parts of the Chaco are habitable for people living in a state of nature.

T 241 15 439 The Bolivian Tobas, although they cultivate maize on a small scale, still get their main supply of this important cereal from the Avas in the north, with whom they carry on a sort of trade. Generally they get the maize in exchange for dried fish, which they store in considerable quantities during the summer season.

M T C 229 Fishing is the main occupation of the tribes living on the River Pilcomayo, and these Indians are therefore never seriously threatened by starvation. During the rainy season, when the river is swollen, fishing is often impossible; the proper season begins in April or May when the water is low and fish appear in abundance along the banks of the river. All Pilcomayo tribes use nets made of *caraguatá* fibres and of a peculiar triangular form, and since they have no canoes or vessels of any kind they always catch the fish by swimming and diving, in which they display remarkable skill. The Tobas, who are particularly skilled fishermen, use not only nets, but also, and I believe more commonly, bow and arrows, a method only occasionally practised by the Choroti and the Mataco. When the Indians have caught a fish they instantly kill it with a small club of palo santo if it is a large one, if it is of a smaller kind simply by biting the head.

T 25/ 438 During a big fishing expedition the Indians, at any rate the Tobas, sometimes catch fish in enormous quantities. They preserve them by roasting, then store them in special shelters, formed of a roof made of reeds and palm-leaves resting on four poles. This dried fish forms an important article of exchange among the Tobas.

M C 224 Next to fishing, hunting is the most important means of subsistence of the Chaco Indians, but in this respect also the Choroti and Mataco are inferior to the Tobas. Especially the Choroti seemed to me to be poor hunters. In the parts of the Chaco inhabited by these Indians game is scarce, and with their comparatively small bows and arrows they only

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

M T C 224 C [262]

rarely succeed in killing a tapir, a deer, or a wild pig. Besides, the deer is an animal of which the Choroti have a superstitious fear, and its flesh is never eaten by them; when they kill one, they only keep the hoofs, which are used as magical rattles, the leg-bones, of which instruments used for ceremonial blood-letting are made, and the skin which is used for different purposes. Of birds, as I have stated before, the ostrich is specially appreciated both on account of its flesh and its plumes, which play a great role as personal ornaments and to which magical power is ascribed. In hunting the ostrich the Choroti, like other Chaco tribes, avail themselves of the trick of binding palm leaves together and placing them on the head and shoulders so as to resemble a young tree. Disguised in this way, the Indians generally succeed in getting within easy range of the shy bird, and are thus able to bring it down with their arrows. Another trick of which the Indians often make use in hunting is that of imitating the cry of certan animals and birds by means of round wooden whistles, particularly invented for this purpose. With the same whistles, which are supposed to possess magic power, they also imitate the supposed whistling sound of the spirits, which are thereby frightened away.

T 224

The Tobas are much more skilled hunters than the Choroti and the Mataco, and, at least in Bolivia, the country inhabited by these Indians is comparatively rich in game. Thus tapirs, deer, and wild pigs, of which latter there are two varieties, are frequent in the forests, and the Tobas hunt them eagerly, using bows and arrows as well as lances as weapons. All Indians and particularly the Tobas, are expert in stalking ainmals; the latter are thereby aided by their dogs which are specially trained for the hunting of the wild pig. Even the jaguar and the puma are hunted by the Tobas with dogs.

M T C 231

Of domestic animals the Chaco Indians keep dogs, sheep and goats as well as fowls.[1] Horses were long ago introduced among the Tobas who

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[1] Nordenskiöld, when treating of the domestic animals of the Bolivian Indians in his *Ethnography of South America seen from Mojos in Bolivia*, p. 114, amongst other things mentions that in Mojos only the civilized Indians keep cattle, which have been introduced by the whites, and adds the following erroneous statements as regards the Chaco Indians: »In the Chaco, on the other hand, *even the independent Indians have cattle* which play an important part for them. *The Indians keep no sheep or goats*». I wish to point out that neither the Tobas nor the Choroti, nor the Mataco on the Pilcomayo keep cattle. On the other hand, sheep and goats are kept by *all* Pilcomayo tribes and, as far as I know, by all other Chaco Indians, except perhaps some savage tribes in the interior of the unknown Chaco.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12
Choroti SK6

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231 soon became skilled riders, but among the other Pilcomayo tribes they are rare. Before the Chaco Indian became acquainted with the white man, the dog was the only domestic animal known to him. These half-starved, fierce, and treacherous dogs are a real nuisance in the Mataco and the Choroti villages to the white traveller who has to stay among the Indians, because in their hunger they are always on the alert to rob him of edible things, among which they include not only his provisions, but also his saddlegear, boots, and other leather goods. Although the Mataco and the Choroti treat their numerous dogs badly and evidently have little use for them even as watches, yet in a way they regard them as members of the tribe. They never kill a dog, however old and wretched it may be, and when it dies they lament over it just as they lament over a fellow-tribesman. This curious practice is due to superstitious reasons, fear of the spirit of the dog. Like many other South American Indians, the natives of the Chaco believe that the souls of their dead tribesmen may reincarnate themselves in the dogs.

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231 Only the Tobas, who are culturally superior to the rest of the Pilcomayo tribes, feed their dogs properly and have real use for them both in hunting and as watchdogs. But even these dogs are of uncertain breed and by nature so savage that for my own part I failed in my attempts to train them according to European methods.

000 These general remarks on the material culture of the Pilcomayo tribes may suffice as a basis for the following description of their social customs and their intellectual culture. I shall repeatedly have occasion to touch upon the ergology of the Indians in describing their magical ornaments and amulets, as well as various objects used at religious ceremonies.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
Toba SI 12
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Choroti Indians fishing in the Pilcomayo.
An old man, wading in the river and beating the water with a stick, is driving the fish towards the fishermen, who stand ready to catch them with their nets.

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Photo W. Hansen.

Young Toba Indians, armed with bows and arrows, hurting in the forest.

SOCIAL LIFE

CHAPTER III.

Social organization. Chiefs.

M T C 619 The social organization among all tribes of the Pilcomayo is fundamentally the same, although the Tobas represent a more highly developed type of society than the Choroti, Mataco, and Ashluslay. Among all of them the »tribe» is a fairly loose social unit, being simply composed by families related to one another by blood. A clan organization in the strict sense of the word does not exist among the Chaco Indians [1]) and totemism is entirely unknown, although the beginnings of a totemistic system may be traced among the Tobas. The appellation »Ostrich-men» given to the Tobas by some of their neighbours, and certain ideas held of this bird by the Indians themselves undoubtedly point in this direction. C 619 As to the *Choroti*, I have already mentioned that they are split up into three principal sub-tribes, each occupying a special territory within the tract which these Indians regard as belonging exclusively to themselves. Although the different sub-tribes feel themselves, in a general way, parts of the same tribal unit, the Choroti people (*Jóhuaha*), there is not much communication between them and, as I have stated before, the relation between the Choroti of the Pilcomayo and the Choroti living in the interior is almost one of antagonism. Within the sub-tribes, again, the feeling of blood-relationship is strong. Such a sub-tribe consists of a number of village communities, each composed of a few families closely related to one another. C 622 As a rule each village has its chief, *anétsiãs*, and over the whole sub-tribe there is even a »great chief»,

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[1]) When in the following pages I sometimes use the word »clan», this term has merely reference to the »sub-tribe», by which I simply mean a number of families recognizing consanguinity. The chief reason why the »sub-tribes» of the Chaco Indians cannot be called »clans» proper is that they are not exogamous.

[p.43] [p.42 is blank]

C 622 *anétsiäs vuh*, exerting a certain social influence. Chieftainship however, among the Choroti is rather nominal than real; even the »great chief» is in fact destitute of power, although in relation to other tribes and to the whites he exercises certain representative functions. Thus when commissions from the sugar factories arrived in the Chaco to negotiate about the sending of Indian labourers to northern Argentine, they had to deal with the chiefs, who through the medium of interpreters gave them answers on behalf of their people. But even the »great chiefs» cannot compel anybody to work, nor can they interfere with the private affairs of the families, in which the father and the mother have full liberty of action. Still more imaginary is the power of the village chief, who is nothing but a *pater familias* enjoying a certain esteem. He cannot command anybody, but merely represents his village community in relation to outsiders, just as the »great chief» represents the whole sub-tribe.

C M 622 The dignity of chief is not hereditary among the Choroti, nor apparently among the Mataco. When the chief dies, the oldest family fathers of the community assemble under the big algaroba tree which serves as a club-house and elect a new chief, the election taking place in connection with a drinking-feast.

C 888 622 Old men are generally held in great esteem, and the chiefs are generally, although not invariably, men of advanced age. Among the Choroti, old men are held in particular esteem for superstitious reasons, since they are believed to be changed, after death, into evil spirits. As we shall see later on in the chapter on the religion of the Indians, the spirits of the Choroti are believed to appear in the shape of old men. Since the natural magical power of the human body is increased with advancing age, it is natural that old people are feared, but the supernatural halo which surrounds them of course at the same time is apt to give them social influence. C 888 754 565 Above all their supposed connection with the spirits makes them qualified to exercise religious functions. Independent of any particular initiation, every old man is credited with the power of conjuring the spirits and is thus always more or less a sorcerer. If therefore we wish to speak of a social distinction among the Choroti, we may say that the sorcerers, called *ayïeu*, are the only members of the Choroti society who in a certain sense form a class of their own or mark the beginnings of a social differentiation. Since, however, every old man is more or less expert in the act of magic and considered able to handle the rattle gourd (*pelite*) or the drum (*usyúk*), the *ayïeu* of the Choroti cannot be called professional sorcerers in the strict sense of the word.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

Social classes do not exist among the Choroti, nor any distinction C
between rich and poor. All members of this primitive society are equally 565
rich or equally poor and, owing to the great social sympathy which unites
them, property is in practice to a great extent common to all. The relative
communism or socialism existing among the lowest Chaco tribes will
be touched upon later.

The social organization of the *Mataco* was originally the same as that M
of the Choroti, but the Mataco-Noctenes of Bolivia have in this as in 177
other respects been considerably influenced by the Tobas and probably
also by the Avas, and therefore at present stand socially higher than the
primitive Choroti. As to the *Tobas*, in their social organization they are T
much superior to the Choroti, although their society is essentially founded 619
on the same principles. Even among the Tobas the »tribe» is in its essence
only a group of families united by the tie of blood-relationship. But 622
whereas among the Choroti the chief is nothing but a respected family 181
father without real power, the Toba chief, called *alyánek*, seems to exercise
a considerable authority, at least in time of war. Although the Tobas
have not been conquerors in the same sense as the Avas, they have always
been a warlike race of Indians, and such peoples generally have more
strongly organized societies than those who have never or only rarely
tried their strength in fighting against enemies and have not grown
accustomed to the order and discipline which war requires.

Social ranks and classes in the strict sense of the words do not exist T
among the Tobas, just as they are unknown to the Avas; but we can trace 565
the germ of a nobility in the fact that the sons and descendants of a great 554
cacique or war chief generally enjoy greater esteem than other members of 622
the society. The chiefs have power to command, especially in times of
war, when their orders are unfailingly obeyed. They distingush themselves
from the rest of their people by having several wives and often by being
richer, since of the spoils taken in war the main part is allotted to them.
Formerly they also distingushed themselves externally from other men by T
a peculiar arrangement of the hair. According to the Catholic missionaries 302
Dobrizhoffer and Charlevoix,[1] all Guaycurú tribes used to pluck out 622
the hair from the forehead to the crown of the head so that the forepart
was bald. This arrangement, which had magic significance, was called
nalemrá, and was the reason why the Tobas were called by the Spaniards

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[1] Dobrizhoffer, *An Account of the Abipones*, II. 17. Charlevoix, *Historia del Paraguay*, I. 135.

302 Frentones. But Dobrizhoffer adds that among the Abipones — who
622 were only a particular Toba tribe — the *nalemrá* of a chief was made much
larger than that of other people, a broad bald path being made from the
forehead to the back of the head. These distinguishing marks are unknown
to the present day Toba chiefs.

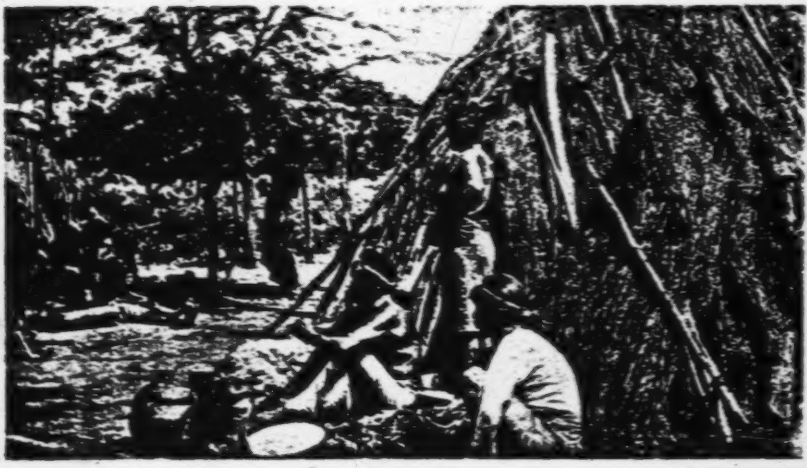
622 The dignity of the chief is as a rule hereditary; the eldest son of a caci-
que generally succeeds his father as leader of the tribe, except when he
is born of a woman whom the chief has divorced. But although a Toba
may inherit the chieftainship from his father, he must always display
certain prominent qualities to be approved of by his people. These quali-
ties are valour, skill, and experience in making war, as well as intelligence
and eloquence. The warlike qualities, of course, are most appreciated.
623 If a chief falls short in this respect and shows himself useless and cowardly
in a war, he is removed by his people, or more strictly speaking, by the
888 Council of the Eldest, in spite of all the merits which his father may have
possessed.

Since the ordinary chiefs, who receive their rank by inheritance, are
622 often too old and decrepit to serve as successful leaders in a war,
701 extraordinary chiefs are frequently elected in addition to them for a war
expedition. These are generally younger men who have distinguished
themselves in battle. If the war has been successfully carried out and
the young man has proved worthy of his position, he may, having pre-
viously been only a temporary leader, be appointed a permanent chief
at the great feast with which a victory is celebrated.

623 The Council of the Eldest just mentioned shows in its way the develop-
888 ed organization of the Toba society. This Council consists of the eldest
men from each sub-tribe and is therefore called *Eakachi* (»The Old
Ones»). One of its function is to watch the conduct and activity of the
chiefs and to confirm their election. Now it is customary among all
Chaco tribes that the eldest men or the heads of the different families
assemble to deliberate the common affairs of the tribe, but it is only among
the Tobas that these old family fathers form an organized body with
622 definite functions. If a chief shows himself cowardly or treats his people
badly, the Council of the Eakachi penalise him and remove him from
623 the leadership. Thus the great chief Taycolique had, just at the time when
I arrived at the Pilcomayo, been removed from his position as chief
[273] because, as the Tobas told me, he was addicted to drunkenness and when
drunk had repeatedly committed outrages against, and even killed, some
of his own people. Still Taycolique to a remarkable degree possessed the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco

Choroti SK6



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Choroti Indians outside their house.

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The open space in the middle of the Choroti village, with a drum placed to the left.

The woman in the middle has a leather strap tied round the chest as a sort of charm against evil spirits.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco

Choroti SK6

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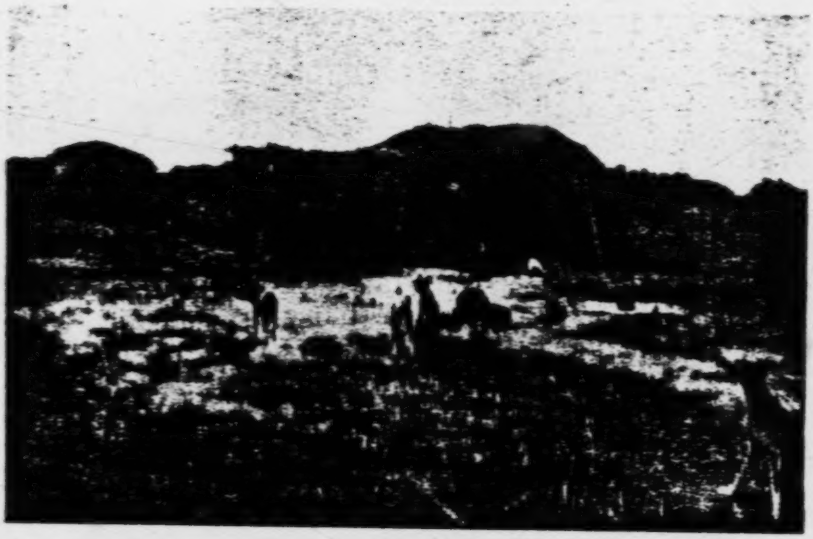

A Choroti settlement in the neighbourhood of Fort Guachalla. Angry dogs are the first to welcome the visitor.

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The old Choroti chief Atamo and his relations.
The scene to the right illustrates the Indian custom of louse-eating.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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very qualities which the Indians appreciate in their leaders. He was T 622
valiant, cunning, and eloquent, and, being a great warrior, had provided 623
his people with firearms which made the Tobas superior in war to all
other Chaco tribes and dangerous enemies even to the whites.

The Eakachi, as is customary in the Chaco, hold their assemblies under T
a shady algaroba tree, generally at the time of the new moon. Besides 623
watching the conduct of their chiefs, they have to deliberate questions
of war and peace and to appoint an extraordinary chief when an attack
against an enemy is planned. In addition, they act as judges or arbitrators
in quarrels and fights between the men.

A social feature characteristic of all Chaco tribes is the relative M
matriarchy or »mother-right» prevailing among them. Descent is traced 611
through the female, the child being supposed to belong to the mother's, and 591
not to the father's, tribe or clan. Closely connected with this idea is the 177
custom prevailing among most matriarchal peoples, that when a man
marries, he stays with his wife's family, becoming a member of her clan.
All these features are found among the Pilcomayo tribes, but particularly C
among the *Choroti* where »mother-right» has developed into real mother-rule. 611
Thus in those parts of the Choroti country where they are neighbours 591
with other tribes and intermarriage takes place, it is the rule that
if the woman is of the Choroti tribe the children become members of that
tribe, whereas, if a Choroti man marries a woman of another tribe, he
himself and the children become members of that tribe. This was particularly
noticeable in regard to the Ashluslay in the South with whom the
Choroti frequently intermarry. Thus the »great chief» of the Choroti
living near the fort Guachalla, the old Atamo, was on his father's side of
Ashluslay descent, but his mother being a Choroti woman he had himself
become a Choroti.

The »mother-right» of the Choroti is not carried to such an extreme C
that for instance the maternal uncle or some other relative on the mother's 593
side is regarded as the guardian of the children. Among the Choroti
both parents are the guardians of the child although, as in other matters, C
the mother has always more to say. Nor does it imply that parentage is [842
wholly attributed to the mother. On the contrary, the custom of couvade, 846]
as it is observed by the Choroti, shows that this maternal people is well
aware of the father's great rôle in the procreation of children. The »mother-right» C
of the Choroti and of other Chaco tribes is in fact only a secondary 562
phenomenon, evidently dependent on the social conditions which
have developed among the tribes in this country, and which in their turn

C 562 are due — at least in part — to geographical causes. As to the Choroti, it is to be noticed that among them the women in general have great social importance, to such an extent in fact, that we may speak of a real C [162] gynaecocracy. This is in the first place due to the numerical disproportion between the sexes which, at least at present, exists in this tribe. The causes of this phenomenon are difficult to assign; there is for instance, no general custom of killing new-born female children which would account for it. C [847] Infanticide is indeed practised in the case of monstrous children and twins, but it has reference to male children as well as to female. Female children are appreciated perhaps more than male children, for the very reason that women are so few in the Choroti society. Whatever the real cause of the numerical paucity of the women, it C 562 462 591 583 is this fact which explains their social influence. Besides this, we have to take into consideration the strict division of labour between the sexes existing among the Indians. For instance, sowing and planting, the carrying of fuel, the gathering of wild fruits, the brewing of intoxicating drinks, and a good deal of other home industries are wholly or chiefly incumbent on the women. This to the Indians means that no man *can* successfully do work which custom prescribes shall be done by a woman. A consequence of this is that particular importance is ascribed to female work as such and that women in general are held in great esteem. From this point of view we must also explain the custom that a man who marries must go and live with his wife's family. It is mainly due to the reluctance of her parents to separate from her on account of the work she performs. Among the Choroti no compensation is given for a bride, because no bargaining of any kind whatever takes place between the members of the tribes. Instead of that, custom prescribes that the young husband shall render services to her parents, which is only possible if he stays with the family of his spouse for a longer or shorter time. In this way matrilocal marriage in the Choroti and other Chaco tribes seems to me to have originated, although the Choroti at any rate are not now aware of these services being really obligatory and a form of compensation for the wife. Marriage among them appears now as a wholly private affair based upon the voluntary agreement of both parties. But where a matrilocal marriage has developed, the children are naturally looked upon as belonging in the first place to the mother and to her tribe or clan, whereas the M husband's importance as a family father is only secondary.

562 584 The same kind of »mother-right» and gynaecocracy also prevails, or prevailed formerly, among the *Mataco* Indians who, for instance, allow

A settlement of Mataco Indians. Mataco-Noctének. Bolivia.

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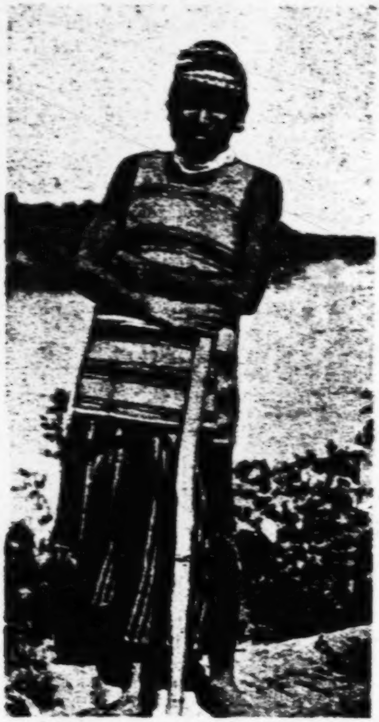

A Mataco Indian dressed in a caraguatá shirt.

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562 the girl to take the first step towards contracting marriage, just as is the
584 case with the Choroti. Similarly the *Tobas* trace descent through the
T female, but social conditions in the Toba society are more highly
611 differentiated and the influence of the women is limited accordingly. The
562 social position of the Indian woman and the characteristic liberty given
her by custom appears in matters of love and marriage, a topic dealt
with in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

Courtship and marriage.

A salient feature in the social life of all Chaco tribes, and one in which they differ considerably from the tribes whom I learned to know in tropical South America, is the great sexual liberty allowed to young people before marriage. As soon as a girl has passed her first menstruation she is considered free to choose for herself occasional lovers, and generally she does not delay in making use of this right. This free sexual life is particularly indulged in during the algaroba season, in connection with the feasts and dances which then take place. The girls avoid the natural consequences of this sexual license by abortion or infanticide, customs which are also approved by the social morality of the Chaco Indians. Having enjoyed this free life for some years, the girl ultimately decides to marry, and then as a rule becomes a faithful wife as long as the husband does not himself neglect his duties towards her. This general state of things is met with all along the Pilcomayo, although customs of course differ to some extent in different tribes. I shall first relate the customs practised among the Choroti in courtship and marriage. M 836 M [847] M 837

The *Choroti* are a strictly monogamous people. During my stay among the different Choroti tribes I never found a single case of polygamy, and I was moreover able to confirm that polygamy is strongly disapproved of by custom and the social morality of the people. It is first of all rendered impossible by the jealousy of the women who, as I have mentioned before, have a decisive influence in matters of love and take the first step towards contracting marriage. C 582 595 593

Courtship therefore among the Choroti assumes rather a peculiar form, inasmuch as the girls play the active, and the young men the passive part. Marriages are as a rule contracted during the algaroba season from November to March, when there is a good supply of food in the villages and C 584

584 the Indians live a happy and joyous life. We may therefore say that this
is the proper »pairing-season» of the Chaco tribes, and particularly of the
Choroti. At other times of the year, when fruit becomes scarce and life
to the Indians is often a hard struggle for existence, they are little inclined
584 for merry-making, love, and marriage. In October, when the very nutri-
tive chañar fruit ripens, the Chaco Indian is, as it were, revived, and a
535 few weeks later, when the algaroba and the tusca trees give their much
836 appreciated fruit, his life is at its gayest, manifesting itself of course in
his sexual interests also. Those young men and women who want to be married then wander about from one village to the other, where dances take place. In each village three dances, those called *Jóhlöki*, *Ahlénta*, and *Avúshe*, are performed on four successive evenings. Free sexual intercourse is connected with these dances, and the girls play an important rôle in them although they do not actively take part in the entertainment. The dances of the Chaco Indians are mainly entertainments of the men. The girls generally content themselves with merely looking at the dancing youths, making their choice among them. Incidentally however a girl may be seen dancing for a while behind a man whom she particularly likes with her hands laid upon his shoulders, and after the dance she takes him away and keeps him for that night. This is something one may notice after each dance, and thus the Choroti dances during the »season» often have the character of real sexual orgies. The last *Avúshe*-dance on the fourth evening is, however, supposed to be decisive as far as marriage is concerned; those girls who have found the men whom they want to marry then keep them not only for the night, but for ever. The young man is taken to the village and house of the girl, where he stays as her husband, becoming a member of his wife's family.

584 The *Avúshe* may therefore be called the proper courtship and marriage
dance of the Choroti. The very name of the dance is interesting from this
535 point of view. The Choroti word *avúshe* means 'vulture' — not the black
vulture, but another kind common in the Chaco[1]) — and the name therefore may be translated as »the Vulture-dance». The idea of the Indians seems to be that just as the vultures jump and dance round their prey, the dead animal, so the Choroti men in the *Avúshe* dance jump round the girls trying to »conquer» them. The girls at this dance, it should be understood, stand within the ring formed by the dancing men. All the young men who take part in the dance are dressed in their best clothes

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[1]) *Polyborus vulgaris.*

and ornaments, wearing many-coloured mantles, necklaces, ear-tubes, 584
big ostrich plumes on the head, and having the face painted. The men 535
form a circle round the girls with arms interlaced round each others'
waists. The dance chiefly consists in jumping with both feet at once and
stamping hard upon the ground to the measure of a very noisy but monotonous
chant. The ceremony is called *nissammaha aséhne*, »to hurry on
the girls». The expression »to hurry on» (*nissammaha*), as we shall find
later, is used by the Chaco Indians in many cases where there is a question
of magically influencing the course of nature for good and useful ends.
Just as the Indians believe they can hurry on or promote the growth of the 584
fruit by influencing the tree spirits and by exorcising the evil demons who 535
are trying to blight them, so they »hurry on» the girls in the sense that by
the dancing and chanting the latter are prompted to make a definitive 776
choice of a husband, whereas at the same time evil spirits are kept away 789
from them. Courtship and marriage, it should be noted, are of those
numerous critical occasions in human life when malignant supernatural
powers are believed to be more than otherwise on the alert to do harm
and spoil the good designs of men, and as usual the weaker sex is supposed
to be particularly exposed to them. The courting dance *Avúshe* is thus
in part held with the intention of keeping off this invisible molestation,
so that the girl's choice of a consort for life may take place under good
auspices.

A man who is not taken away from the dance by a girl has no possibility 584
of getting either a temporary paramour or a wife. The matter wholly
depends on the girls, and there are of course always men who for one reason 589
or another are despised. I sometimes noticed such unfortunate lovers
at the Choroti dances. Their experience had led them not to take part
in the dances; they were sitting in a hut close by, eagerly shaking the
rattle gourd (*pelīte*), as they said, »to hurry on the girls» and thus possibly
to have better luck in the future. Since the women are much fewer in
number than the men, it is necessary that some men are obliged to remain
bachelors all their lives. These men were ridiculed not only by the
women but also by their more fortunate brethren. On the other hand,
there are no unmarried women, and even widows soon remarry unless
they are very old.

The men may try to attract the girls at the dances by their beautiful [832]
ostrich plumes, necklaces, and other ornaments, but these means of
attraction certainly only play a subordinate part. The Choroti woman 581
evidently expects something more of a man whom she thinks of marrying 584

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

C 581 584 or whom she only wants for a temporary lover. Above all she wants as a husband a man who treats her well and possesses the qualities necessary to support the future family. Since the Choroti to a great extent live by fishing, skill in this art is naturally reckoned among a man's most praiseworthy qualities. Importance is also attached to skill in gardening and hunting. Consequently, when a young man is courting a girl, he tries to gain her favour by presenting her with fish in abundance. I was told that when several men are courting the same girl — which naturally is often the case — the man who brought her the largest quantities of fish had the greatest chance of gaining preference.

C 581 593 Thus among the Choroti, marriage is from a man's point of view an important matter. When the parents send out their young son to take part in the dances and to find a wife, they follow his undertaking with the keenest interest. Every evening the father shakes his magical rattle gourd (*pelīte*) in order to promote his son's enterprise and »hurry on» the girls on his behalf. When the rattle gourd is used for such practical purposes the ceremony is called *nekaflitse simā*, which literally means: »to shake the rattle to get (or obtain) something».

C 585 Apart from these ceremonies in connection with courtship, there are no particular marriage rites, except the necessary drinking-bout which accompanies all family feasts and in which only the men take part. The young couple are without any further ceremony regarded as married, but marriage is not fully complete until a child is born.

M [171] [562] 527 536 584 Among the *Mataco*, marriages are not particularly contracted in connection with the dances, but conditions are the same as among the Choroti in so far as the women play the active part both as concerns incidental amorous relations and marriages proper. The great drinking-feasts during the algaroba season are the occasions when a woman enters into temporary or permanent relation with a man. When the men are intoxicated, the girls avail themselves of the opportunity, seize the youths whom they like by the hands and take them to their houses where they spend the night with them. These liaisons lead in many cases to real marriages.
M 585 789 535 When marriage is agreed upon, it is celebrated with the usual ceremonies which have a religious significance. The drum, the most important magical instrument of the Mataco, is beaten the whole night with a view to keeping off evil spirits from the couple. Similarly, a ceremonial dance, called *Nahútsak*, is performed in the evening. It is a ring-dance much like the marriage dance *Avúshe* of the Choroti. The couple being married are seated in the middle of the ring and their friends dance and chant around

2: Karsten, E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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M 585 789 535

them. The aim of the dance is partly to protect the former against supernatural dangers, an idea generally associated with the Indian ring-dances. But in addition, it seems to have special reference to marriage, for it is supposed in some mysterious way to influence the marriage candidates favourably. On this particular point, however, I did not receive further information from the Indians.

T 595 556

Lastly, we have to consider the marriage customs of the *Tobas*. The Tobas are generally monogamous for the simple reason that it is difficult for an ordinary man to maintain several wives and a large family, but there are exceptions to this rule. Polygamy is, however, allowed by custom, and if a Toba considers himself rich enough and has an opportunity of getting wives, it is of no rare occurrence that he marries two, three, or more women, who generally live in different villages owing to the jealousy they entertain for each other. T 595 622 586 This kind of polygamy is especially found among the great chiefs. Thus the famous cacique Taycolique has had in all ten wives. One has died, he has divorced five, and at the time of my stay among the Tobas he had four wives. Such great chiefs frequently separate themselves from their wives only for the sake of marrying some younger and prettier woman. The children of a divorced wife have not the same rights as the children of her supplanter, and if the eldest son is born of such a wife he cannot become chief on the death of his father; in this case the eldest son of the new wife will inherit the chieftainship. The father, however, does not break completely with the children of a divorced wife if they are adult, but maintains relations with them, and they sometimes visit their father.

T 836

Among the Tobas, as among most Chaco tribes, pre-nuptial chastity is almost unknown, great sexual liberty being allowed both boys and girls before marriage. As soon as a girl is marriageable, that is, has passed her first menstruation, she may choose casual lovers, and generally she does not fail to make use of her freedoom. T [548] Although in some parts of the country, the sexual liberty of the Toba girls seems to have degenerated into prostitution, there is no doubt that the social morality of the people has approved of this custom since ancient times. T [584 171] The young men and women meet at the dances, some of which, among the Tobas as among the Choroti, are intimately connected with the sexual life. The girls cannot, however, as among the Choroti, take the initiative in contracting marriage.

T 584

When a Toba man has found a girl whom he likes and wants for his

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
Toba SI 12

584 wife, he asks her hand of her mother.[1]) The latter, having consulted her
daughter, may accept or refuse the proposal. Frequently it is difficult
for the suitor to get the girl he desires. He has to bargain for her repeatedly,
and in order to make himself agreeable to his future parents-in-law
and at the same time show his ability to maintain a family he brings them
fish, game, and other presents. Now, although these presents are not
meant to be a payment for the bride, but proofs of the suitor's ability to
fulfil his duties as a family man, the custom has undoubtedly a tendency
to develop into a system of purchasing the wife. Still marriage by purchase
583 in the proper sense of the word is unknown to the Chaco tribes. On
the other hand, even marriage by capture occurs among the Tobas as a
method of acquiring wives, and not merely in connection with war.
It may in some cases happen that the suitor, without asking the parents
for the girl, simply steals her or elopes with her to another part of the
country, where he will keep her as his wife. This of course is particularly
the case when the parents of the girl deny their consent to the marriage.

585 If the proposal is accepted, marriage takes place without many ceremonies.
535 The most important is the dance *Nahotti* which answers to the
Mataco *Nahûtsak* and which takes place the first night after a marriage
has been arranged. The dancing boys and girls form a ring round the
newly-married couple, who sit close to a big fire without taking part
273 in the dance. The incident is also celebrated with the usual drinking-feast,
algaroba beer (*maplyi*) being drunk by the men in great quantities.

584 Formerly the trials to which a suitor had to submit in order to win
the girl he wanted for his wife were much more severe, as may be inferred
from an account by Father Cardús. The custom which he describes is
of so much interest that I may quote it at length.

»As soon as a young man considers that he has sufficient power and titles to marry, he simply addresses the parents of the girl he wants for his wife and asks for her hand. If the parents accept the proposal they construct, outside the house, a small hut of straw with a small entrance and a hole in the middle. They put the girl into the hut and bring her some food at certain hours, and she is not allowed to go out except for the most urgent necessities. The young man, having previously made a cincture of the bones of various animals killed by him, hangs it round his waist and places himself outside the hut. He starts to beat a sort of

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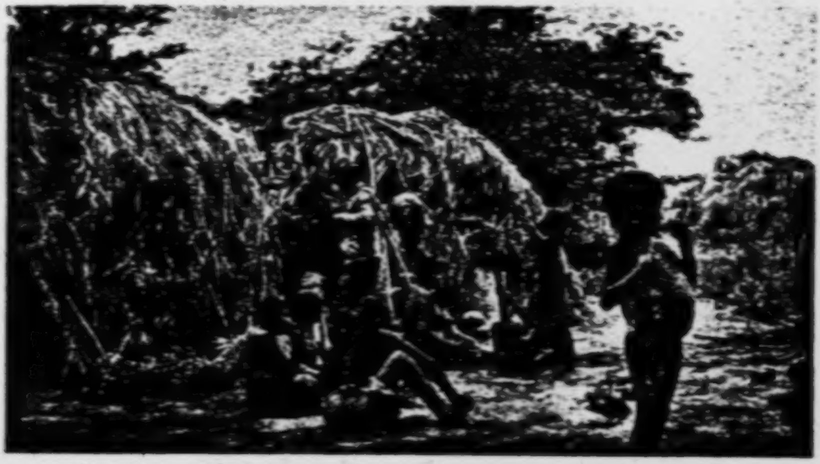
[1]) According to other information which I received, the suitor has for this purpose to address *both* parents.



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A village of the Argentine Tobas.
The houses are of the same primitive type as among the Choroti.

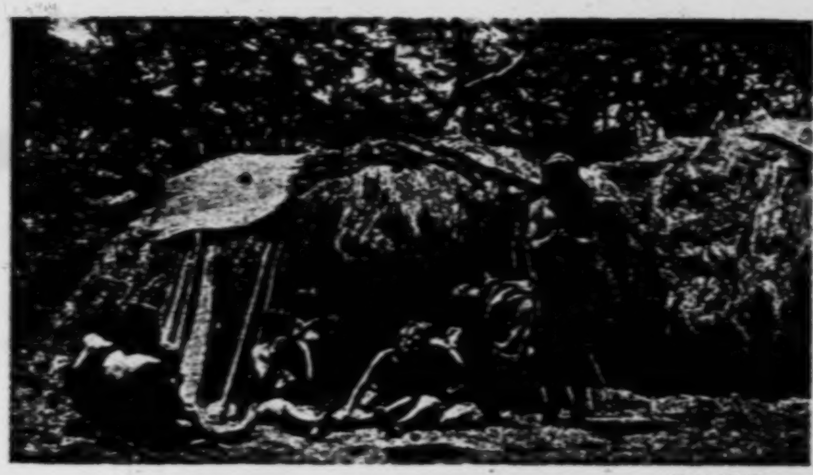

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Photo W. [illegible]

A Toba family outside its dwelling. Argentine Chaco.
In the middle the usual lousing-scene.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
Toba SI 12

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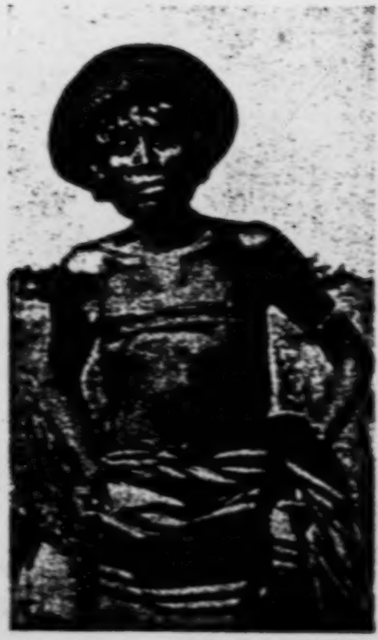

A Toba chief of the Argentine Chaco.

Notice the leather strap tied round his breast.

Photo W. [illegible].

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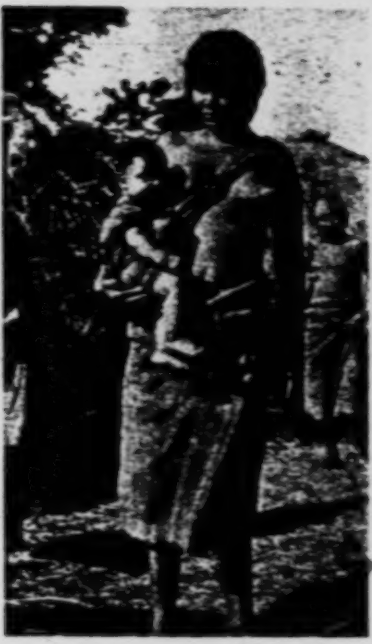

Photo W. [illegible].

A Toba woman with her child.

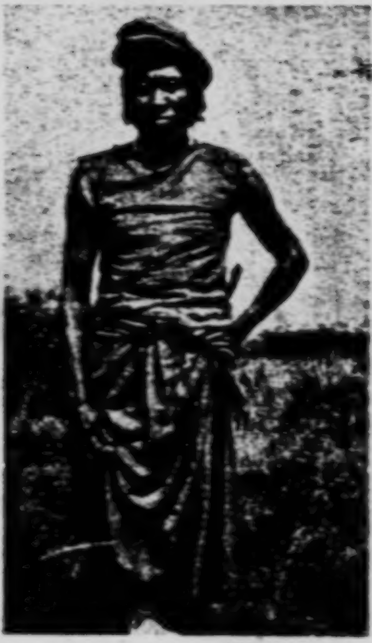

Photo W. [illegible].

A Toba man from the Argentine Chaco.

small drum which they call *pimpia*, moving the body up and down and 584 from one side to the other, in order that the bones which he wears round the waist may make a noise, at the same time chanting in a low voice a chant customary among them in such cases. The girl sits inside, looking through a hole at her future husband and listening to his chant. The young man has to continue this performance regularly, for a period up to eight days, standing chanting, beating the drum and moving his body, whether it is cold or hot, whether it is raining or the sun is broiling, he being allowed to interrupt the performance only for the most urgent needs. If he rests too much or gets tired, above all if he does not please the parents of the girl, they may tell him that he is not good enough to marry their daughter. — On the other hand, if the parents are pleased with him it does not matter if he be a little lazy, and in such cases the mother of the girl, as if to encourage him to endurance, may, on the fourth or fifth day, plant one or two poles close to the place where he stands, putting a little straw or some branches upon them as shelter during the hottest hours of the day, or when it is raining. Such an attention is a expression of the affection which the suitor's future parents-in-law feel for him and at the same time a guarantee that, as soon as the performance prescribed by custom is finished, his wishes will be fulfilled.»[1])

This custom, which no longer prevails among the Bolivian Tobas, is interesting as revealing both the religious and the social significance of marriage among the Indians. The marriage candidate, as pointed out, has always to show his strength and endurance as well as his ability to support the future family; the cincture made of the bones of animals killed by him which he wears round the waist, and the chant continued for several days and nights are natural demonstrations of these qualities. But marriage has at the same time a religious significance; on an occasion like this, which decides the whole future of two people, the evil spirits are always on the alert to frustrate the good designs of men. The suitor, with the aid of his drum, his rattling cincture, and his chant, tries to keep away the demons who want to attack and harm his future wife. Similarly, the dance *Nahotti*, performed in the night, and the drinking-bout, as we shall see later on, have a religious or ceremonial character.

In all cases where the marriage arrangement has been made in a 591 friendly manner, the newly-married man goes to live in the house of his parents-in-law, becoming a member of his wife's family. The children

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[1]) Cardus, op. cit. pp. 283 sqq.

T 591 also belong to the mother's tribe or clan. Although the Tobas have thus the maternal system of descent, this »mother-right», as already pointed out, does not amount to real matriarchy or mother-rule, as among the Choroti.

C 582 As to restrictions in contracting marriage, there seems to exist among most tribes a native law prohibiting unions between very near blood-relations. Among the Choroti, and probably the Ashluslay and Mataco, first cousins are not allowed to marry. The Choroti only gave me the explanation that cousins are »like brother and sister»; marriages between them would be looked upon with the same horror as if a brother and a sister
T 582 married each other. Of the Tobas I was told that they have no objection to cousins marrying each other. Still, considering the similarity of the social customs and institutions of the Chaco tribes, I doubt whether the same restriction as to cousin-marriage which exists among the lower tribes has
M 582 621 not formerly existed among the Tobas also. — Since the families belonging to the same village community are generally closely related to each other, marriages do not as a rule take place between persons of the same village. On the other hand, marriages are generally, although not exclusively, contracted between persons belonging to different village communities of the same sub-tribe. The outer circle within which marriage is allowed is very wide. The Chaco Indians have no objections to marrying women of foreign tribes, and wars are often waged for the very purpose of stealing young women who are afterwards married by the victors.

C M T 586 Divorce occurs in all Chaco tribes, although more frequently among the Tobas than among the primitive Choroti and Mataco. A Toba, Mataco, or Choroti man may leave his wife merely for the sake of marrying a younger and prettier one, since conjugal fidelity is not a prominent virtue of married men in the Chaco. Still, such cases are rather exceptional in Choroti society. The very fewness of the women and the difficulty of getting a new wife instead of the one divorced naturally makes divorce difficult as far as it depends on the man. In all the tribes, on the other hand, a woman may leave her husband if he proves unfaithful, if he treats her badly, or if he is lazy and unable to support her. Of the Toba women particularly I noticed that they left their husbands for very trifling reasons. Unfaithfulness on the part of married women seemed to me to be a common thing among the Tobas, but this may in part be a consequence of the unfavourable influence which the contact with civilization has exerted upon the social morality of these Indians. As for the husband, adultery

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12
Choroti SK6

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casually committed with another man rarely caused him to divorce his wife; divorce took place only when she continued to maintain illicit relations with other men. The fact that among the Tobas polygamy is sanctioned by custom seems to have a tendency to make matrimonial unions looser than among the monogamous Choroti. But in all tribes the rule is that marriage lasts for life.

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If the women in general seemed to be more faithful in marriage than the men, this was in part due to the fact that in the former jealousy was a very prominent quality. After the Choroti girl has made her choice of a partner, she faithfully keeps to him and jealously watches his conduct towards other women. If she suspects him of being unfaithful, she will soon remind him of his duty towards his own wife. If she discovers him in illicit practices, for instance in another man's house, or taking part in the dances, she at once seizes him by the hair and drags him to his own home. This is in fact the way in which the Choroti women generally treat their unfaithful husbands, that is to say, by seizing them by the long hair and taking them home. I never noticed that a man treated in this somewhat rough way made any resistance. The submissive attitude of

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Young Toba woman. Bolivian Chaco.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
Toba SI12
Choroti SK7

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the men in such cases showed to what extent the women dominate the home life of the Choroti. There is not, among these Indians, any punishment for adultery as such, for the very reason that punishment in any form is unknown within the tribe. — Among the Tobas again a man may beat his wife if she commits adultery.

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On the other hand, if a Choroti woman gets to know of a female rival, the result will in all probability be a fight between the two women, who use a sort of boxing glove of hide, or small daggers consisting of the leg-bone of a deer pointed at the end. The same custom is followed by the Mataco and the Toba women, in whom jealousy is likewise a prominent quality. Among the Tobas particularly, fights between girls who have fallen in love with the same man are of frequent occurrence. Similarly, if a married woman gets to know that her husband maintains illicit relations with another woman, the consequence is in most cases a fight between the legitimate wife and the rival, and these fights are not seldom sanguinary. The one even tries to kill the other which, of course, she very seldom succeeds in doing. Such fights are continued for several hours, often for a whole night, during which the two enraged women beat each other with the hands, scratch each other with the nails, or wound each other with big cactus thorns which they have tied at the wrists.

CHAPTER V.

Position of the women. Division of labour.

The influential position of the women among the Chaco Indians has 562
already been touched upon. The facts mentioned as to the »mother-right» prevailing among these Indians, the right of the Choroti and Mataco women to propose marriage, etc. give us to understand that the social position of the Chaco woman is by no means that of an oppressed slave, as it has sometimes been described by superficial observers. Even the Tobas, in spite of comparatively frequent divorce, hold their women in high esteem, as may indeed be inferred from one of their myths about the origin of the women. It is therefore impossible to subscribe to the opinion expressed by Campos with special reference to the Tobas when he says that »the women, as has been stated by all, are the yoke-carriers of the house; they are the slaves and not the comrades of the men». Only a passing traveller, who has not had an opportunity to study the social conditions of the natives properly, can arrive at such an opinion. It is true that matrimonial relations are not as ideal among the Tobas as among the Choroti, where women have the right to choose husbands and wholly dominate the family life. Among the Tobas it may happen — as would never happen among the Choroti — that a husband beats his wife, either because he is bad himself or because she has proved unfaithful and tried his patience too much by her jealousy; but such cases are rather exceptions than the rule; generally the Toba husband treats his wife with kindness and affection.

The division of labour between the sexes prevailing in the Chaco as 462
in other parts of South America, easily gives a superficial observer the impression that the women are treated by the men as inferior and subjugated beings. The home industries, especially spinning, weaving, and pottery-making, are wholly in the hands of the women. They not only have to do

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462 the general domestic work, but in particular to collect and carry home wild roots and fruit from the forest as well as fire-wood and water. Thus every afternoon one can see the women returning home laden with heavy burdens of fuel or of algaroba or other fruits, carried in large net-bags. The hardest workers in all tribes are the older women. At any rate I noticed that the younger married Toba women shunned the heaviest work, for instance the carrying of fuel, leaving this to the older women of the family. As to agriculture, both sexes take part in it, but the men do the rough work, felling the trees and clearing the ground. The domestic animals, that is to say, the goats, sheep and fowls, are left to the care of the women. The men, in addition to the rough work they perform in agriculture, reckon fishing and hunting as their main occupations, the Toba men being also frequently occupied in warfare, which is a real
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[825] profession among these Indians. The armadillo, which is regarded by the Tobas as a »female» animal, is the only game caught by the women.

This division of labour is very strictly observed. It is not an accidental institution, nor due to the desire of the men to oppress the weaker members of society and to compel them to do such kinds of work as they do not, for one reason or another, like themselves. It is, as it were, founded upon the nature of things and in some cases connected with the animistic ideas of the natives. A man would be ashamed to do work which according to custom is incumbent on the women, and similarly a woman would seem ridiculous did she perform a man's work. A European who notices for instance a Choroti family when about to move, and sees the wife laden with an enormous burden of things belonging to the family, and perhaps a sucking child in addition, whereas her husband goes free and disengaged, only carriyng his bow and arrows, might easily arrive at the conclusion that the Choroti husband treats his wife like a slave; but the conclusion would nevertheless be wrong. The husband must have his hands free among other things to be able to defend the family with his weapons against venomous snakes or other dangers threatening it on the way, or to hunt. The women themselves look upon this state of things as being perfectly natural.

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562 The industry which is characteristic of the Indian woman in the Chaco as elsewhere in South America is thus by no means an expression of her inferior social position. The work she does is not compulsory but voluntary and must be wholly explained by the conditions of life which have developed among the Indians. Mr. Grubb, who during his long stay among the Chaco Indians acquired a perfect knowledge of their

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
Toba SI12

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Bolivian Tobas working outside their house.

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A long-houses in a Toba village in the Bolivian Chaco. On the open space a woman is grinding maize.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913) [illegible]2 SI7 Mataco
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Photo W. Hansson.

Toba Indian catching fish with their nets in a lagoon. Argentine Chaco.

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Photo W. Hansson.

A Toba youth shooting fish with bow and arrow.

psychology, is quite right when he points out that in reality the men do M
their fair share of the work, although it is not seen to such advantage as 462
that of the women. Thus fishing and hunting which are the chief occupa-
tions of the men are by no means a pastime or recreation, but a serious, 562
onerous, and often dangerous undertaking; and the same of course, in a
still higher degree, holds true of warfare.

As to the Toba woman, her independent and influential position T
appears in its way from the right she possesses to decide about the future 562
husband of her daughter; as we have seen, the mother's consent is parti-
cularly required. The women also show their influence when raids against 721
other tribes are planned, exciting the passions and revengefulness of the 627
men. And in all tribes the women serve as permanent and self-elected
arbitrators. When quarrels arise at the drinking-feasts, which is not
unfrequently the case, and threaten to develop into sanguinary fights, it
is the women that allay the agitated feelings and separate the fighters,
thus preventing more serious calamities..

CHAPTER VI.

Birth customs.

M Various customs are practised at the birth of a child, many of which
843 are of a religious significance, their aim being to protect the new-born
child and its mother against supernatural dangers. Both the ideas and
the practices to which they give rise are much the same among the Choroti,
the Mataco, and the Tobas. As soon as the Indian woman feels herself
to be pregnant she begins to observe certain rules with regard to her diet.
She generally abstains from eating meat, contenting herself with maize
T and certain leaves. The Toba women during this time take particular
[843] care not to eat fish. and with other kinds of animal food she is cautious.
Thus if she eats the paunch or the intestines of a cow she will fall ill and
birth will be rendered more difficult. When the child arrives, it is washed
M in water, the umbilical cord is cut off with a snail's shell and guarded for
844 some time with great care. If the cord were cut off with a knife, the child,
it is believed, would soon die. No iron instrument must come in contact
with the new-born babe. Again, the navel-string cut off must be guarded
until the navel wound is perfectly healed. If it is thrown away prematurely,
this would be the same as throwing away the life of the child, which
would die in consequence. The umbilical cord, according to the idea of
M the Indians, remains in some mysterious connection with the new-born
[171] child. These ideas are found among all Pilcomayo tribes, but they seem
to be common to all South American Indians living in a state of nature.

The rites and ceremonies taking place after the little one has arrived all depend on the belief of the Indians that there is a very intimate connection between the child and its mother, and that both of them are badly exposed to the attacks of evil spirits. Fully to understand them and the behaviour of the woman in child-bed we must first of all take into consideration that the Indian woman in general bears children with great

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)193? SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

ease, without suffering much pain. From the point of view of the savage M 844 it is of special importance that this should be so. As the *Choroti* explained the matter to me: if at the birth the woman is ill, this is due to her being C 844 possessed by an evil spirit, and the demon, owing to the close connection between mother and child, will also take possession of the latter causing it to fall ill and die. Hence the weakness and sickness from which possibly she is suffering must be concealed and reasoned away. The Choroti have a stereotyped phrase to express this: *lasīhe īse lóuet* = *lahse ihe, eis lóuet*, that is: »when the child is born, the mother is well». As a matter of fact, C 846 a few hours after the delivery the Choroti woman is seen to move about doing some small tasks in the house, fetching water, preparing food, and so on. In short, she acts as if she were quite hearty, thus deceiving herself, her relatives, and the evil spirits. But the curious thing is that among the Choroti the *father* of the child, seemingly instead of the mother, lies in bed, looks weak, fasts, and is attended by the women, in short, behaves just as if he were the person who had given birth to the child and were suffering pains. The precaution which the woman shares with her husband, in addition to abstaining from hard work, is that she has to diet. Like him she avoids meat, limiting her diet to boiled and mashed maize, the leaves of certain trees and certain other vegetables.

This is the custom generally known under the name of *la couvade* (»hatching») and which among the Choroti exists in its most typical form. The father remains lying in bed for five or six days, or *until the navel-wound of the child is perfectly healed*. The reason for this is quite obvious and was, besides, expressly pointed out to me by the Indians. The navel-wound may become a dangerous source of infection, and the new-born child is in its most delicate condition during the first days or until the navel-wound is healed.

M 846 Before I give further explanations of the ideas underlying the couvade practices/ I shall say a few words about the birth customs of the Mataco |71| and the Tobas. These tribes do not practice couvade in the proper sense of the word, but they have the same ideas about an intimate connection existing between the new-born child and both parents.

What I have stated as to the birth customs of the Choroti also holds M 846 true of those of the *Mataco*, with the exception that the Mataco father does not actually lie in bed. He has nevertheless to take certain precautions, and the fact that he pretends to be in a delicate condition during the first critical days of his child's life is shown by the expression the Mataco use of him. He is said to have an *aíttah limpáh*, that is to say.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

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846 »to be a little sick», which means that he has to be cautious with regard to his work and his diet, just like his wife. Any heavy work, hunting, fishing, the touching of iron instruments, is prohibited to the father, since otherwise his delicate son might fall ill and die. Fasting is likewise obligatory for both of them. The Mataco say of both parents: *uenhitātāk, yil vuh. i.e.,* »they do not eat, there are many demons of death» (moving about and threatening especially the child, but also the parents themselves). A light vegetable food, mainly consisting of boiled and mashed maize, is prescribed for both of them.

When the confined woman has been delivered, her ventral parts must be well covered to protect her against evil spirits which might do her
M harm. In the evening drums are beaten to keep off the same supernatural,
[622 malicious powers. If the woman is the wife of a great chief, a special
535] dance is performed which the Mataco call *Katinâh* and which takes place at great feasts celebrated by the whole village community. Like all other dances of the Mataco, the *Katinâh* is in its character ceremonial or a sort of conjuration by which evil spirits are kept off or made harmless.

T Among the *Tobas*, just as in part among the Mataco, the ceremonies
846 which are performed and the precautions taken are more elaborate when the mother is the wife of a great chief. Even some time before birth takes
622 place the woman, as we have already seen, has to observe certain rules in regard to her diet, abstaining particularly from eating fish. As soon as the woman has been delivered her body must be well covered, for otherwise, I was told, the evil spirits may enter into her and kill both her and her new-born babe. The danger is particularly great at night. Therefore the Indians assemble in great numbers outside the chief's house, chanting the whole night, accompanying themselves with their rattle-gourds and drinking great quantities of algaroba beer. In the day the young men perform the dance *Nomi*. During the first days the woman does not leave the house, and although she is not ill she remains completely inactive. She likewise continues to fast, eating neither fish nor meat and living solely on maize and certain leaves. — The above ceremonies are performed, and the rules of diet are observed, during five days, or until the navel-wound of the child is completely healed.

T Much the same ceremonies are performed when the mother is a woman
846 of ordinary rank, with the exception that the father of the new-born child alone chants to his rattle the first evening after the birth; and the dance *Nomi* does not take place. The happy event is always celebrated by an algaroba drinking-bout. The mother does not stay in bed and

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12

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does not seem to be ill, but she abstains from any work during the five critical days and goes on dieting, particularly avoiding fish.

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All these customs are based upon the belief that, at the moment of birth and during the first days afterwards, both the new-born child and the mother are particularly exposed to the attacks of the evil spirits, called *peyák*. These demons are believed to arrive in great numbers in the form of snakes — a special kind of snake existing in the country of the Tobas — but invisible, and with every breath of wind try to enter the house and penetrate into the woman with the consequence that, if they succeed in doing so, both the mother and the child will fall ill and die. The chanting and the shaking of the rattles at night and the dancing in the day-time, just as the precaution to cover the woman, have for their object the protection of the mother and child and to keep off the evil spirits. Similarly, the drinking of algaroba beer is on this occasion of a ceremonial character, as we shall see later on.

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Not only the mother, however, but also the father of the child has to observe certain precautionary rules especially in regard to his diet. The custom of »couvade», at any rate nowadays, only exists among the Tobas in a modified form. According to what the Indians themselves told me they formerly practised this custom almost as strictly as the Choroti do still, the father being obliged to lie inactive in his bed for many days, strictly fasting. In our days the Toba father does not observe a real couvade, in so far as he does not keep to his bed. He merely abstains from doing hard work and avoids certain kinds of food, because they are believed in some way to influence unfavourably the health of his new-born child. Thus for instance, if he eats the head of a cow his little son will soon die. Similarly he must be cautious in eating fish. His principal food during the critical days consists of maize and certain fruits. These rules are observed for about one week. That the first days are considered so critical, is due to ideas which we already found among the Choroti and Mataco. When among the Tobas I asked the father of a new-born child how long he had to keep the rules of couvade, he pointed to the navel of his son, meaning to say that as soon as the navel was all right the danger was passed. It is believed that evil spirits might enter into the child by the navel-wound and kill it.

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In my work *The Civilization of the South American Indians* I have tried to describe the ideas underlying the custom of couvade, which in South America is practised by most tribes in one form or another. Whilst referring the reader to this work for further details, I shall here only add

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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846 a few words to explain the custom with particular reference to the Chaco Indians. The primitive idea that a new-born child is especially exposed to supernatural dangers is not difficult to understand; like most savage customs it has an underlying stratum of reality. The child is naturally at the beginning of its existence in a delicate state, and as a matter of fact, the mortality among new-born children is terribly great in the Chaco as in other parts of South America where the natives live in a state of nature. The Indian from his standpoint cannot fail to ascribe such facts to supernatural causes, and therefore the ceremonies at birth assume to a great extent a magical or religious character, conjurations and similar rites playing a prominent rôle in them.

As I have already pointed out, the couvade practices are essentially founded on the idea that between the new-born child and both parents there exists an intimate connection so that everything that happens to the parents is also supposed to happen to the child. Now as far as the mother is concerned, it is not difficult to understand why primitive peoples have arrived at the belief in such an intimate connection between her and her new-born babe. Being keen observers they have undoubtedly noticed that while the mother suckles her child, her own physical and mental condition is to a certain degree reflected in her delicate offspring.
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842 More enigmatical appears at first sight the firm conviction of the Indian as to a still more intimate connection or sympathy uniting the *father* with his new-born child. This curious idea is explained by the peculiar theory of conception which is held by the Indians. The primitive Indian does not know that the germ of the new being is in fact in the woman herself and that the man only fecundates it at the sexual act. He evidently believes that the seed springs from the man and that the rôle of the woman is limited to receiving and developing it during pregnancy, just as the earth receives the seeds planted into it and in due time brings forth the full-grown fruit. This is the idea which Professor von den Steinen found among the Xingu tribes, who regard the *man* as the bearer of the eggs, and consequently afterwards could identify the father and his new-born son, calling the child »the little father». This idea is evidently general in South America, for instance in the Gran Chaco, and explains why the Indians consider the relationship existing between the father and his new-born son still closer than that existing between the child and its mother.
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847 There are indeed customs which so strongly emphasize the father's share in the generation of offspring, that the latter appears to be almost wholly of the flesh and blood of its father. Thus among the Tobas there

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prevails the custom that a man simply kills the child of his married daughter if his son-in-law has incurred his displeasure; and all Chaco women kill their new-born babes if they have been abandoned by their husbands and, in general, when the father is unknown. Similarly an Indian woman as a rule kills the child she bears to a white man directly after it is born, if not before. Such customs no doubt assume the recognition of a very intimate relationship between the child and its father. The child is part and parcel of the father, or rather, *is* the father. Hence, if the woman is displeased with her husband and has broken all relations with him, she destroys the child she has born him.

Young Toba Indian outside his house. Bolivian Chaco.

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According to the idea of the Indians the father with his new-born child forms as it were one single personality, and everything which happens to the father during the critical days is supposed to affect his little son directly. The rules which the former has to observe concern first of all the food. If the father eats some unsuitable food, this — as the Indians told me — would be just the same as if his delicate son ate the same food and the consequences would prove fatal to the latter. The situation remains critical as long as the navel-wound is not perfectly healed. If, at birth, complications of any kind ensue with the new-born child or with

846 the mother, these are at once set down as the operation of evil spirits. The parents, especially the father, are released from the restriction laid upon them by custom as soon as the child is assumed to have become independent of the physical and mental constitution of its parents.

851 Among the Chaco Indians, there does not exist any ceremonies corresponding to our baptism, but a *name* is always given the new-born child. 553 The Chaco Indians name their children after animals, birds, reptiles (for instance Bird, Alligator, Lizard), or after bodily peculiarities observed in the child (for instance: Tsihnilak, »Paunchy», a Choroti name), but the names seem on the whole to be given at random and not with the same discrimination which is the rule among some Indians of tropical South 551 America. There is however one peculiar feature to be noted in this respect: the reluctance generally displayed by the Indians to mention their real names. I very rarely heard the Indians using each other's names in their daily conversations, and if one wished to find out the name of a certain Indian, this was as a rule extremely difficult. When a Choroti, a Mataco, or a Toba went to the settlements of the whites to work, he usually assumed a special European name for that time. Such names they never had any objection to mentioning, but they were extremely unwilling to tell me their proper native names. Only on certain occasions — for instance, at the drinking-feasts when all were in high spirits and very good friends — did it happen that the Indians told me one another's names. The native name, received in early childhood, is the real name and is to a certain degree taboo. To reveal it is a perilous thing, especially if the individual *himself* does it. It is to put oneself wholly in the power of an unknown stranger and wilfully to expose oneself to mysterious dangers.

[761] As we shall find later on, the names of the *dead* are particularly taboo.

CHAPTER VII.

Abortion and infanticide.

The custom of infanticide has already been touched upon, and as a matter 847 of fact it is found among all Chaco tribes. The Indians do not consider [858] a new-born child an independent personality, and it is looked upon as being so entirely the property of the parents that these have full right to do with it what they like. If for some reason or other the parents do not like to keep it they can destroy it, and such cases are by no means rare. Still it is necessary to point out certain facts with regard to infanticide as practised by the Indians, since the custom has not seldom been misunderstood by Europeans. The Indians do not kill their children from a lack of natural parental feelings; on the contrary, it must be emphasized that the savage Indian loves his offspring just as tenderly as do civilized people. Further, the Indians do not kill normal children except in such comparatively rare cases as those mentioned in the last chapter. A regular custom of killing for instance new-born female children does not exist. Infanticide is mainly practised in the case of children who are born in some way abnormal or under abnormal circumstances. In the first place it is superstitious fear that induces the Indian to kill his 845 children. According to the Indian idea monstrous or in some way deformed children, or children which in general are born very sickly, cannot have been conceived in a natural way; they must have come into being through the operation of a demon. Indian myths, to which I shall refer later on, have much to tell about women who became pregnant in a supernatural way, during bathing or otherwise, and in consequence gave birth, not to a human child, but to a monster. Such a monster is looked upon with horror and regarded as a most ominous thing not only for the family concerned but for the whole village. It is an evil spirit that is born in the midst of the Indians and which will visit the whole community with sick-

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 S17 Mataco S17
Toba S112

M 845 ness and misfortune. Thus the Choroti expressly declared to me that if at birth a child is very sickly or deformed, this is due to its being possessed M by an evil *mõhsek* (spirit), and they therefore generally kill the child at [776] once. The Mataco call their evil spirits *aittáh* and regard a monster as an *aittáh* personified. Similarly the Tobas believe that a sick child is possessed T by a demon (*peyák*), or is itself such a demon, and owing to the close con- 845 nection which there is between the child and its parents, this may entail 776 unfortunate consequences for the parents also, nay, for the whole tribe.

T Father Cardús relates that when among the Tobas a woman dies in 766 child-birth, the new-born child is buried alive with its mother's body [1]). 847 I do not believe that such a custom is practised by the Tobas of to-day, M but it may well have existed formerly. A woman who dies in childbirth is always regarded by the Indians with superstitious fear, since the ac- 761 cident is explained as an operation of evil spirits to which the woman has 766 fallen a victim. But the new-born child with its mother forms, as it were, 853 one single personality; consequently the child also is regarded as being possessed. Besides, a sucking child which is bereft of its mother is also left without nutrition since, according to Indian ideas, a new-born babe can only be nourished with the milk of its own mother, and would thus die in any case.

M We may of course also assume that practical considerations have led 847 the Indians to infanticide. The Indians understand that a sickly or deformed child has scarcely any chance of developing into a strong man and a useful member of society. In the hard struggle for existence under which the Indian lives it may even be merciful to destroy him. I believe however that such considerations play only a subordinate part in the custom of infanticide, which must first of all be explained by superstition.

M The same custom prevails with regard to *twins*. Among all tribes the 845 second is generally killed. The birth of twins is among all Pilcomayo 847 tribes looked upon as an unnatural and most ominous thing, since the Indians consider that one man cannot become the father of two children M at once. The second, consequently, must be the offspring either of another [853] man or of an evil spirit. Besides, the Indians say that a woman has not sufficient milk to nourish two babes at the same time, and from this point of view also twins are regarded as unlucky. The Indian woman, who has to work hard, is anxious not to bear more children than she is 000 able to nourish and to take care of. In a Choroti family three or four

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[1]) Cardús *op. cit.* p. 263.

In a Choroti family three or four children, arriving at intervals of two or three years, seemed to me to be the rule. Among the Tobas and the Mataco the children were somewhat more numerous, especially in families where the man had two or more wives. Whether the matter is or is not arranged by abortion, I cannot say. 163

Abortion is practised by unmarried women who become pregnant in consequence of their sexual licentiousness. I have never seen unmarried women with children in any tribe. Married women also have recourse to feticide or infanticide when they have been abandoned by their husbands. Similarly, as I have stated before, a Toba man may kill the newborn child of his married daughter if his son-in-law has incurred his dislike. 847

Abortions are effected by the Chaco women by mechanical treatment. The woman kills the foetus by beating her abdomen and after that presses it out with her thumbs. She may perform the operation herself or be aided by some old woman. This is done fairly early, generally in the third or fourth month of pregnancy. The operation is said to cause the woman some pain, but does not seriously affect her health. Poisonous drugs or other abortive means are not used by the Chaco Indians.

If the Indians find nothing immoral in infanticide, this of course is still less the case with abortion. It is wholly a private affair of the woman or of her family, with which the community as such does not interfere. A feticide certainly does not cause her more remorse than the extraction of a tooth. Custom is very strict on this point, not only among the Chaco tribes but among all South American Indians.

CHAPTER VIII.

Education of children. Puberty ceremonies.

855 In the last chapter I have pointed out that infanticide, as practised by the Chaco Indians in certain cases, cannot be explained as a token of a lack of parental feeling in general. The Indian parents love their children, feed them well and try to protect them not only against natural dangers but also against evil spirits by means of body-painting and amulets. To what extent they take care of the well-being of their offspring is best shown by the custom of couvade. Even at those times of the year when the food is scarce I do not believe that the Indians allow their children to suffer from hunger. At the algaroba
855 season again, when there is an abundance of food, the children go on
261 eating from morning till night, and since the food to a great extent consists of fruits more or less indigestible, it is at that time a common thing to see young children of both sexes whose stomachs are abnormally distended so as to make them really paunchy. Gluttony is a characteristic feature of the Chaco Indians during the »seasons», but especially of the children.

855 The Chaco Indians bring up their children in complete liberty. Parents are never seen punishing their children for disobedience or faults
861 committed. This is partly due to the fact that the sense of what is proper and permissible is not developed among the Indians in the same way as in civilized societies. The Indian hates restraint and fetters of any kind, he wants to be free and independent himself and grants his children the same liberty. The latter, on the other hand, from an Indian point of view very seldom appear punishable, since they easily accommodate themselves to the customs and moral views of the tribe. An Indian boy may rob or do some other harm to a stranger, be he an Indian of a foreign tribe or a white man, but he will, from a natural instinct, respect the property of a

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
Toba 5/12

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Photo W. Hanssen.

Toba boys of the Argentine Chaco. The one standing most to the right is armed with a small bow and arrows.

Toba girls of the Bolivian Chaco.

855 member of his own tribe. In the training of the Indian children the power
of example and the natural desire to imitate has the most effect. It is
861 interesting to note how the young boys constantly watch the occupations
of the elder men and how easily in this way they acquire the necessary
868 skill in the same occupations, above all in fishing and hunting. When the
Toba boy is about six or seven years old, his father makes him a small
bow and arrows with which he frequently practises shooting, thus at an
early age acquiring dexterity in managing the weapon. Similarly the
girls follow their mothers everywhere, down to the river, to the fields,
and the forest, keenly watching how she does her work and soon learning
to do the same.

881 As far as I know, no particular ceremonies are performed among the Choroti and Mataco with young boys at the attainment of puberty, nor do the present day Tobas in Bolivia practise any ceremonies of this kind. According to some ancient writers, the Tobas of the 18th century practised certain ceremonies with young boys, consisting of a peculiar arrangement of their hair and in pricking them on the body with sharp-pointed bones, but since the particular purpose of these ceremonies was to initiate them into the profession of a warrior, I shall reserve the details till later on, in treating of Indian warfare.

On the other hand, when a young girl has her first menstruation and becomes marriageable, the incident is celebrated among all Chaco tribes with certain feasts, dances, beer-drinking, and purely religious rites. In order fully to understand these ceremonies it is necessary to know the ideas which the Indians entertain about the mysterious phenomena of puberty. It is by no means sufficient to say that the puberty ceremonies simply serve to initiate the girl into her coming sexual life; their significance is much deeper.

881 The physiological process which causes the menstruation of the
women, incomprehensible as it seems to the Indian, strikes him as some-
941 thing extremely mysterious and must needs give rise to certain superstiti-
[821] ous beliefs. Thus both the Tobas and the other Chaco tribes seem to have
the idea that this strange phenomenon is caused, or at any rate influenced,
by the new moon. Moreover, since the menstrual periods, and especially
the first menses, are as a rule connected with certain nervous disorders
and other alterations in the physical condition of the woman, it is natur-
ally thought that during these critical days she is seriously exposed to
the influence of evil spirits. At the same time, of course, owing to the
awakening sexual desire, the relationship between this physiological

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process and the other procreative functions of the woman is realized. 881
The attainment of puberty therefore for the Indian girl certainly means 841
the beginning of her sexual life, but at the same time it means her entrance into a very critical epoch of development, during which she is often — especially at child-birth and during the following menses — exposed to supernatural dangers. Hence the initiation ceremonies at puberty have for their object partly her direct protection against these dangers for the time being, partly her purification once for all from the evils associated with her sexual functions during the years to come or — to express it more plainly — to *harden* her against evil spirits. From this point of view we have to regard all puberty ceremonies of the Indians, even such practices as painting, scarification, and tattooing of the body or face, often undertaken with girls on the attainment of puberty. M [304 302]

In the dances and conjurations performed in honour of girls at puberty it is the women who, contrary to what is generally the rule in religious ceremonies, play the most prominent part. Among the *Choroti* the puberty of girls is celebrated with a magical dance called *Káusīma* after the instrument which the women use for it; the instrument is called *káhuis*. The *káhuis* is a dancing-staff, two or three meters in length, made of a light kind of wood or bamboo, which has a bunch of deer's hoofs tied at the top. These rattles produce a hollow sound when the staff is struck on the ground and are supposed to possess a mysterious power to influence the spirits. This power of course must be explained from the fact that to the Choroti the deer is a demoniacal animal. The *káhuis* staff is the only magical instrument used by the Choroti women and it is never handled by the men. C 881 535 789 C [825]

The dance begins at the first new moon after the appearance of the signs of puberty, because the moon is believed to cause and have great influence upon the menstruation of women. It is performed every day until the following new moon, sometimes even still longer. At a *Káusīma* dance which I witnessed the arrangement was as follows. The mother of the girl and some other elderly women formed a circle, or rather an elliptic ring, outside the hut where the girl was, each holding her rattling dancing-staff. Close to the ring four medicine-men were sitting at equal distances from one another, holding their rattle gourds (*pelīte*). There were besides two more medicine-men standing up, each provided with a drum. During the dance the women moved round ceremoniously with slow, regular steps, chanting loudly and marking time with their rattle staffs which they struck on the ground. The men outside the ring also chanted, shaking C [824] 881 535 C [534]

881 535 their rattle gourds, whilst the men provided with drums beat them. The girl in whose honour the dance was held was standing motionless and silent at the entrance of the hut reclining against the wall and had to remain so during the whole ceremony. Sometimes, when towards evening she got tired and was on the point of falling asleep, one of the medicine-men came up to her and shook his rattle close to her face as if to keep her awake. The ceremony began in the afternoon and was continued with short pauses throughout the whole evening until midnight. I was [292] informed that as long as the dance goes on the girl need not be veiled, but as soon as the conjuration is finished for the night she must have her face and her whole body well covered. During the whole period [262] that the dance is performed she is moreover obliged to fast, avoiding fish and meat and living only on some light vegetable food.

881 302 I may add that all the men who took part in the ceremony were painted on the face in one way or another. Some of them simply had the face coated red with roucou or black with charcoal, whereas others had X-shaped or other patterns painted on the cheeks. The men's faces are always painted in this way at the conjurations of the Indians, and these paintings have a purely magical significance.

881 273 The drinking of algaroba beer also forms part of the magical practices at the feast, but it is strictly limited to the men.

881 780 773 845 The object of all these ceremonies is to protect the girl against the evil spirits, the *mōheek*, by which she is believed to be particularly attacked during her unclean condition. The spirits try to enter into her through the face — especially through those parts where there is a natural opening of the body, such as the eyes, the ears, the nose, and the mouth — and also through the ventral parts, the consequence being, if they succeed in doing so, that she will fall ill and die, or become supernaturally pregnant and give birth to a monster. It is in this way that the Indians account for the birth of those deformed children which they kill directly after birth. To prevent such frightful accidents the girl's head and body are covered after the conjuration is finished for the night. By means of the dancing, chanting, drumming, etc. the evil demons who take an interest in the girl and swarm about her are conjured and rendered harmless. According to the idea of the Indians she is not only protected for the time being against their attacks, but she will also retain a certain power of resistance against them in the future.

881 535 The puberty of a girl is not celebrated in all cases among the Choroti with so many ceremonies as in the case just described, but the

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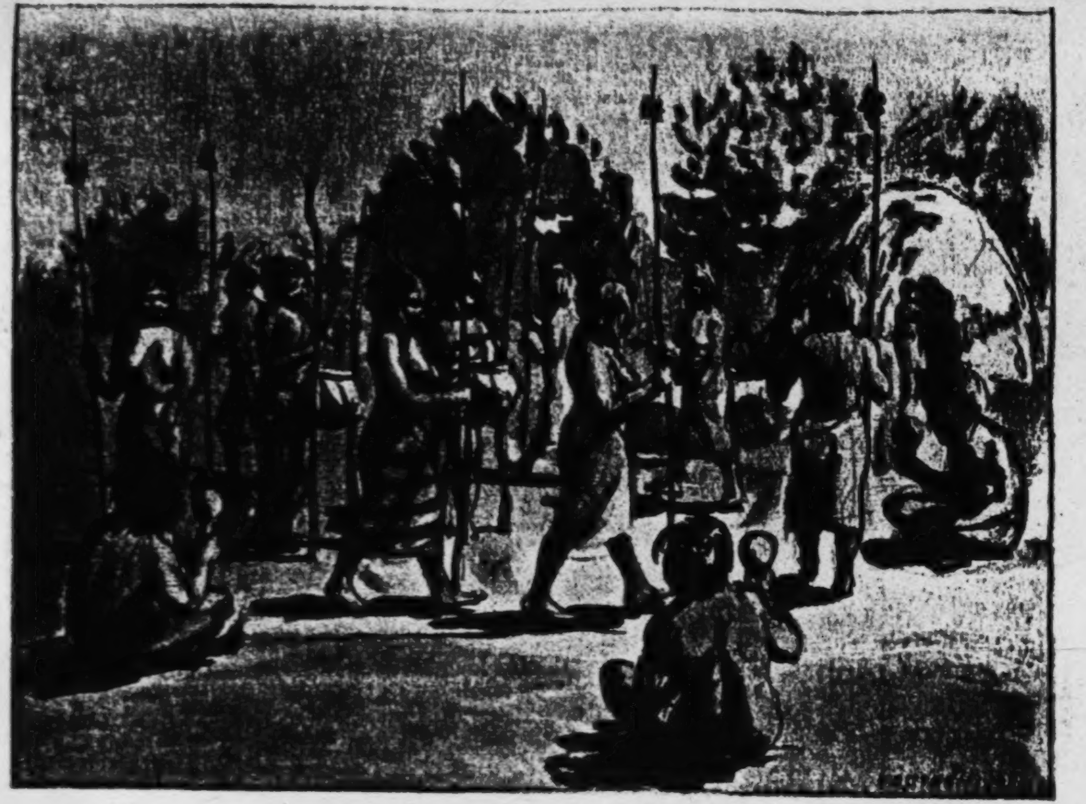

Painting by E. Wasström

The *Kdusima*, a magic dance of the, Choroti, performed in the honour of girls at puberty. The girl is standing at the entrance of the hut.

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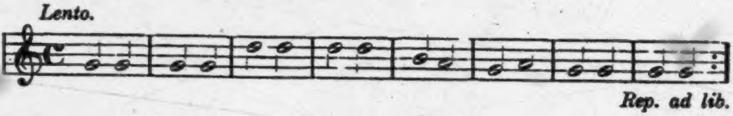
881 535 *Kausīma* dance is always obligatory. Thus in a case which came under my notice the dance was performed by a middle-aged woman who, holding the dancing-staff (*káhuis*) in her right hand, proceeded with slow regular steps backwards and forwards in front of the house, where the girl, in whose »honour» the dance was performed, was sitting motionless. The 881 woman accompanied her dance with a peculiar monotonous chant marking 535 time, as usual, with the *káhuis*. Sometimes one of the small girls went 533 and joined her, holding the dancing-staff together with her and walking in the same time. The dance and chant was begun at sunset and continued with short intervals till midnight. The melody of the chant which was repeated over and over again, was the following:



It is evident that the object of the dance was to drive away or keep off the evil *mōhsek* who were trying to harm the girl.

171 Exactly the same custom prevails among the neighbours of the Choroti in the south, the Ashluslay Indians, who in their culture are so closely related to the Choroti. The fact that the rattling dancing-staffs form a magical instrument peculiar to the Chaco tribes, may also be inferred from the puberty ceremonies in vogue among the *Lenguas* of Paraguay. These ceremonies are shortly described by Mr. Barbrooke Grubb, but since he gives no explanation of their significance I may mention them in this connection, with more reason since the Lenguas are culturally closely related to the Indians of the Mataco-Choroti group. The main dance is, as among the Choroti, performed by the women who circle round the girl to be initiated, chanting and marking time with their rattle staffs. A troop of lads, dressed in ostrich plumes and wearing masks to represent evil spirits, issue from the forest, running one behind the other in a serpentine formation, move in and out among the crowd, jingling bunches of hoofs and from time to time uttering prolonged shrill cries. At their near approach the women dance and chant with increasing vigour round the girl pretending to protect her and to drive off the masked »spirits»[1]. The idea just indicated by me with regard to the Choroti, namely, that the young woman will, through the initiation, become permanently har-

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[1] Grubb, *op. cit.* p. 178.

dened against evil spirits, seems to appear very clearly from the puberty ceremonies of the Lenguas. The girl, in order to be hardened against the spirits, must be brought in close contact with them, but this must be arranged in such a way that they cannot do her harm. The lads have at first conjured the dangerous invisible foes and compelled them to enter into the masks by imitating them in their external appearance and by uttering cries which no doubt are supposed to imitate the cry of the spirits. When afterwards the girl comes in contact with the demons while they are thus subdued and rendered harmless, she is believed to obtain a certain immunity from them even for the future. The principle is exactly the same in other initiation ceremonies. C 171

Among the Tobas the puberty ceremonies are more complicated when the girl is the daughter of a great chief, in which case the incident is celebrated by the whole community and with much the same ceremonies as take place when the chief's wife is in child-bed. For the five critical days the girl is not allowed to leave the house; she must fast rigorously and keep the whole body well covered. Every evening all the younger men from the neighbouring villages assemble outside the chief's house, shaking rattles, chanting, and drinking algaroba beer. During the day, again, the festival dance *Nomi* is performed by the men. The object of all these ceremonies is to conjure the evil spirits and prevent them from coming in the night to attack the girl. The Tobas fancy that on this occasion also the *peyák* arrive with the approach of night in the shape of snakes, trying with every draught of wind to penetrate into the house and to enter into the young woman, in which case it is believed that she will become pregnant with a snake, or fall ill and die. T 881 622 T [535] T [776]

Ideas of supernatural birth brought about by evil spirits entering into the woman in the form of snakes, seem to be common among the Tobas, as may be inferred from one of their myths which I shall relate in a subsequent chapter. T 842

During the days that the girl is kept secluded she is also obliged to fast strictly. She is allowed to eat only the leaves of the plant *parák* (tusca, *Acacia aroma*) as well as the leaves and the fruit of the vine *tasi* (*charáde*, in the Toba language), the former raw but mashed, the latter boiled. T 881 262

After the menses have passed, the mother of the girl together with other women go out on the plain to catch armadillos. The men, on the other hand, go out to hunt ostriches. After that a great feast is arranged, at which the women together with the girl in whose honour the feast is

881 held eat armadillo, the men the meat of ostrich. The latter, besides,
262 drink algaroba beer excessively.

The distinction which is thus made between the sexes in regard to the
881 kind of food they have to eat at the banquet mentioned must be explained
262 by Indian superstition. The Tobas believe that the souls of dead men
775 reincarnate themselves in ostriches; hence the ostrich has become as it
were the special symbol of the Toba men. This also appears from the fact that the Tobas have simply been called 'Ostriches' by some of their neighbours. Similarly the armadillo has, probably for the same reason, been particularly associated with the women.

881 The customs described above are observed when the girl in whose
honour the feast is held is the daughter of a great chief. In other cases
535 the puberty of a girl is celebrated with the *Nahotti* dance which is performed on five successive nights. The young men form into a ring holding one another by the hand and dance and chant in honour of the girl, who
sits in the middle on the ground with her face covered. During the day
[302] she has her face painted red with *urucú*. Except on the occasion of the dance, she does not leave the house and observes a fast, eating nothing but the leaves I have mentioned.

841 Although the first menstruation is the most critical, the Toba woman has also to observe certain precautionary rules during the following menses, since she is at these periods in a more or less delicate situation. »When a woman has her menstruation (*lolyák*), the evil spirits (*peyák*) are angry with her», was the declaration an Indian once gave me when
we were discussing these questions. What a Toba woman always does
[302] at such periods is to paint her face red with *urucú*, this being regarded as a protection against the supernatural enemies. She is also subjected to a
841 diet, in that she religiously abstains from eating fish, which — according to a belief held at any rate formerly by the Tobas — would entail unfor-
262 tunate consequences for the woman. If a woman who is just in her monthly period eats fish — so a Toba woman declared to me — she will go mad. If that has happened and her husband, having been out hunting, should bring home a parrot, the woman will eat its head raw with the consequence that she will turn into a tiger and kill her own people. I am not certain whether this particular belief is held any longer, but all Toba women still believe that if they eat fish at the critical epochs they expose themselves to the danger of temporary madness, or of becoming very thin and at the same time paunchy, that is to say, very ugly and little attractive to the men.

The aversion to eating fish among the Toba women is met with in T 262 connection with mourning customs also. As to the ideas underlying this superstition, they will be considered in a later chapter.

The puberty ceremonies of the Bolivian *Mataco* are much the same M as those of the Tobas. The first menstruation (*opetetéih* in the Mataco 881 language) is regarded as a critical event which necessitates certain precautions. 554 As is the case among the Tobas, these precautions are more elaborate when the girl is the daughter of a great chief. 622 In that case she is completely isolated for five days, strictly dieting. Every evening drums are beaten outside her hut to keep off the evil spirits, the *aittáh* or *nahút* which are trying to do her harm. As usual, a drinking-feast is arranged for the men.

If the girl is the daughter of an ordinary man she is allowed to go out, M but every evening a dance is held in her honour. This is the ring-dance 881 which the Mataco call *Nahútsak* and which like all Mataco dances is 535 purely ceremonial in its character. The girl sits in the middle of the ring, having the face covered with a cloth, while the other women dance and chant around her in order to keep off the *nahút*.

Not only the first menstruation, but similarly the following monthly M courses of a woman are regarded by the Mataco as critical in so far as 841 she is then particularly exposed to supernatural dangers. The Mataco woman therefore on these occasions always takes the precaution to restrict her diet, abstaining particularly from eating fish and meat.

There is one more custom which is practised among many Chaco M tribes at the time of puberty and therefore may be considered in this connection 304 — the custom of *tattooing*. Tattooing is done by the *Mataco* and the *Choroti* in about the same way, the women being always and the men sometimes tattooed. The operation is carried out by an old woman: the skin is pricked with a cactus thorn or a sharp bone so that the blood flows, whereupon soot mixed with saliva is carefully rubbed into the wounds. Since the operation is of course extremely painful and makes the girl sick for some days, it is performed gradually, during the course of several years, the intention being that it should be completed when the girl is marriageable. Only the face is tattooed. The first marks are done on the forehead when the girl is about six or seven years old. In the course of the following years new marks — small circles, crosses, half-moons, M lines — are added, and when the girl has attained the age of twelve to [582] fourteen years and is considered marriageable, practically the whole face is covered with them. Since the wounds rubbed with ashes cause

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

M 304 inflammation in the face the girl has to fast for some days after the operation.

M 304 751 Tattooing has a purely magical significance, as may be inferred from the fact that the Mataco and the Choroti women regard it particularly as a protection against disease. Analyzing the custom, we can distinguish at least three factors in it, all of which are associated with magical ideas: first, the scarification or bleeding itself; second, the matter (soot, ashes) rubbed into the wounds; and third, the patterns and marks incised which remain when the wounds have healed. Bleeding and scarification are common practices of purely magical significance among all Indians of South America, and as far as the Pilcomayo tribes are concerned I shall have occasion to mention this custom again in a later chapter. The very scars left after such operations are regarded as a protection against evil M [789] spirits. Further, that tattooing is done by means of ashes or soot is certainly not an accident. The use of ashes for superstitious purposes is of frequent occurrence among the Indians, the general idea being that ashes M [827] are a prophylactic against evil spirits. The custom of mixing ashes or soot with saliva is significant from the same point of view, for magical virtues are commonly ascribed to the saliva.

C 304 751 789 All women among the Choroti are tattooed in the same way, that is, have the same marks and patterns applied to the face, and no full-grown woman lacks this tribal characteristic. Since tattooing is regarded as a permanent protection against evil spirits and sickness, it is natural that a woman lacking it should be shunned by the men, but it is not a means of attraction or a »decoration» in the common sense of the word.

T 304 184 [382] As to the *Tobas*, tattooing or the custom of making indelible marks on the body or the face was formerly in vogue among all Toba tribes as among all peoples of the Guaycurú-group; but the Bolivian Tobas of the present day have dropped this custom, contenting themselves with simple body painting. Tattooing among the Tobas seems to have been limited to the female sex, as indeed is the rule among the Chaco tribes. According to d'Orbigny, the Toba girls were tattooed when they attained puberty and became marriageable. Since the custom is no longer practised by the Bolivian Tobas I have not seen how it is done by them. The procedure, however, is the same as among other Chaco tribes, incisions being made in the face and ashes rubbed into the wounds. As appears from the photographs of some Toba women which Dr. Lehmann-Nitsche took in Buenos Aires in 1899 the tattooing practised by the Toba women was exceedingly elaborate and complicated.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

The custom of tattooing, as it was practised by the ancient Guaycurú is described by Father Dobrizhoffer in much the following way. The Abiponian women, says the Father, [1]) not content with the marks common to both sexes, have their face, breast, and arms covered with black figures of various shapes, so that they present the appearance of a Turkish carpet. As soon as a young woman is of age to be married, she is ordered to be marked according to custom. She reclines her head upon the lap of an old woman and is pricked. Thorns are used for a pencil, and ashes mixed with blood for paint. The old woman, sticking the points of the thorns deep into the flesh, describes various figures till the whole face streams with blood. The first day she is sent home with her face half pricked with the thorns, and is recalled the next and the next after that, to have the rest of her face, the breast, and the arms pricked in like manner. Meantime she is shut up for several days in her father's tent and wrapped in a hide that she may receive no injury from the cold air. Carefully abstaining from meat, fish, and some other sorts of food, she feeds upon nothing but a little fruit which grows upon brambles and conduces much towards cooling the blood. [2]) 000

From Dobrizhoffer's account it appears that tattooing was practised by the ancient Guaycurú in the same way as by the present-day Chaco tribes.

Among the puberty customs we may also, in a certain sense, reckon the perforation of the ear-lobes for the insertion of wooden plugs or tubes. The perforation takes place even before the age of puberty, when the boy or girl is five or six years old, but the wooden ornaments are inserted later and are a sign that the boy or girl in question is regarded as a man or woman. The ear-lobe is pierced with a cactus thorn by an old woman, a grass or small wooden pin being inserted so as to prevent the wound from closing. Later on bigger and bigger pins are inserted, by which the holes are more and more extended, and lastly the plug or tube, which forms one of the most prominent ornaments of the Indians. The wooden plugs which the Tobas formerly wore in their ear-lobes, were so thick and heavy that they hung nearly down to the shoulders. In our own days they are only used by the Argentine Pilága, not by the Bolivian Tobas. It is to be observed that although the ear-lobes of both sexes are perforated, the ear-plugs or tubes are among the Choroti, Mataco, and Ashluslay worn chiefly by men, seldom by women, whereas among the Tobas *only* men wear them. These ornaments seem to have chiefly a magical significance.

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[1]) Dobrizhoffer, *An Account of the Abipones*, II. 20 sq.

[2]) This fruit is evidently the tasi fruit mentioned above, which thus is still eaten by the Toba women when they have to observe ceremonial fasting.

CHAPTER IX.

Social morality. Property. Law.

000 In the chapter on the social organisation of the Chaco tribes I had occasion to mention the social sympathy and feeling of solidarity which unites all members of the tribe, manifesting itself amongst other things in the widest hospitality. A few words may be added in this chapter to illustrate this characteristic feature of the social life of these Indians.

181 Mr. Barbrooke Grubb, who is probably the greatest living authority on the Chaco Indians, regards the »socialism» prevailing among these Indians as their greatest curse. According to him, it discourages competition in the way of one man striving to rise superior to his fellow-men and effectively impedes cultural progress in general. No Indian is encouraged to have more possessions than his neighbour, because, in obedience to the socialistic law, he would have to work for the support of others of whom he does not approve. Accordingly he produces no more than is absolutely necessary for current needs. He never saves anything for the day of adversity because others are not doing the same and therefore, if he had a store in reserve, the thriftless would step in and share it with him. It is owing to this system that the Chaco Indian has become the thriftless, lazy, and selfish fellow that he is. The chief endeavour of the [797] Mission led by Mr. Grubb therefore was not only to impart to the Indians true Christian civilization in general, but particularly to destroy their old socialistic system with a view to making them self-reliant workers accumulating property by their own efforts.[1])

000 Mr. Grubb has naturally looked upon the conditions and moral character of the Indians with the eyes of a Christian missionary and may be quite right in his general contentions as to the best methods of civilizing a pagan

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[1]) Grubb, *op. cit.* pp. 189 sqq.

Indian tribe. For myself I have regarded them mainly from the point of view of the ethnologist and social psychologist, and cannot help holding a somewhat different opinion on the subject. The state of things which Mr. Grubb found among the Lenguas, it should be noted, is in the main the same as among all Chaco tribes. Mr. Grubb disregards the fact that what he calls Indian socialism, with the solidarity and social sympathy which it involves, is not accidental but the natural outcome of evolution and the circumstances under which the Chaco Indians have lived for centuries. It is not only a natural system but also a useful system, having been developed according to the Darwinian law that in a hard struggle for existence such societies have the best chance to survive in which the sympathetic feelings are strongest. In fact, nowhere is mutual aid more necessary than among the half-nomadic Chaco tribes, who are able to practise agriculture only to a small extent and who, as pointed out before, at certain times of the year have to struggle hard to support life. Lacking these social feelings, I believe, many of the smaller tribes, for instance the Choroti, would have perished long ago. Besides, the very history of the Chaco Indians proves that they have been driven into these inhospitable regions by forces over which they had no control, the most important being the pressure of superior peoples. Pressed from behind and meeting resistance from those already occupying these lands they were compelled to fight for their very existence. These facts of the historic past of the Chaco Indians account for the warlike character of many of them, but also for their strong social instincts. 000

Social sympathy is developed strongest among low tribes such as the Choroti and Ashluslay, but also manifests itself among the Tobas and the Mataco. What Mr. Grubb says with special reference to the Lenguas, that »the apparent hospitality is given grudgingly, though ostensibly with a good grace», does not at any rate hold true of the *Choroti*. I have mentioned before that bargaining in every form is unknown to the Choroti, and this is due simply to the fact that they regard themselves as being socially so intimately united that property and the products of labour are practically common to all. When a party of Choroti men return from fishing they always distribute the catch in the village so that every family has its share, and if one asks a Choroti why he does so, his only answer is generally: *etsïni*, *i.e.* »they are my brothers». »We are all brothers», is the principal tenet of their social morality There is an unwritten native law which states that no single family or individual shall suffer want as long as there are others who possess food. This system is looked

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476 upon as perfectly natural, and since full reciprocity exists, such an act of
apparent liberality does not even evoke feelings of gratitude in those who
for the moment are the objects of it. Those who have been travelling and
574 therefore have not produced crops, or those who for some other reason
have no means of subsistence for the time being, have a claim on the
hospitality of their fellow-tribesmen. Even when there is nowhere a real
want the successful hunter or fisher gladly shares his abundance of food
with other families of the village, knowing that others will do the same to
him on another occasion.

574 Native law enjoins hospitality not only to fellow-tribesmen but also
to members of foreign tribes with which the Indians stand on a friendly
609 footing. The same hospitality and liberality is shown to a white man
whom the Indians regard as their friend. For my own part I frequently had, both among the Tobas and the Choroti, personal experience of this Indian hospitality.

421 In spite of the liberality which appears in the relations of the different members of the community to one another, private property is strictly respected in all the tribes. We can particularly speak of »socialism» in regard to the *land*, which, as I have mentioned before, is considered to belong to the people in general; no Indian, not even a chief, has a direct claim to any part of it above his fellows. The flocks of sheep and goats feed on the common pasture. Similarly the natural products of the country, such as game, fish, wild fruit, honey, and fire-wood, are common property. But as soon as an individual family has taken possession of a piece of this common land for cultivation, its ownership is acknowledged and respected as long as the family actually cultivates it. What the Indian collects of the natural products of the country and what he produces or acquires through his own work — such as clothes, ornaments, weapons and implements, magical instruments, etc. — is also regarded as his exclusive property, although, as soon as food is in question, an unwritten moral law and social sympathy largely induces the individual owner to share it with others. The flocks of course also belong to individual families. The sheep and goats always wear property marks, so that when they are taken home from the pasture in the afternoon the Indians can easily determine who is the owner of each animal.

556 The lower Chaco tribes, particularly the Choroti and the Ashluslay, do not know of any distinctions between rich and poor, and even among the Tobas it is a comparatively rare thing that a man possesses more than his fellows. Only a few great chiefs who have made successful wars against

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

other tribes have larger flocks and more wives than the rest of their people. It is not a part of the Indian's nature to accumulate property for the future. This habit of living from hand to mouth is the chief reason of the poverty characteristic of the Chaco Indians. Only the women, who are in the first place responsible for the food supply in the house, may save food, at least for the next few days or weeks. The seeds necessary for the next sowing are also guarded by the women.

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Among the Chaco Indians there is no law of inheritance, owing to the native custom of destroying a man's property, even his house, after his death.

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Honesty is one of the native virtues of the Indians. Among the primitive *Choroti* and *Ashluslay*, who at the time when I travelled in the Chaco were quite unaffected by European civilisation, thefts and other gross crimes were entirely unknown, being prevented by the strong social feeling. Honesty is not only displayed towards fellow-tribesmen, but also towards a stranger and a white man, unless he has through his own conduct forfeited the respect which the primitive Indian, owing to his natural sense of right, would normally have for his property. As a significant proof of this I may mention the following experience which I once had among the Choroti. In April 1912, shortly before I intended to leave these Indians and return to Yacuiba, one of my mules ran away from me and was lost in the forest in the neighbourhood of a Choroti village, and in spite of prolonged searching could not be found. At last I was obliged to leave the village without my mule. At the end of the same year, about eight months later, I again visited these regions and the same Choroti village. My Indian friends at once informed me that some time after I had left, my mule had been caught by some other Choroti Indians and was now being kept in a other village, a few hours walk further off. An Indian was at once sent for the animal, and on the following day the mule was brought and given back to me. The Indians, supposing that I would return some time, had kept the animal, fed it well and taken care of it. It is needless to say that it would have been the easiest thing for them to hide it until I had again left, and to keep it for ever. They however considered it their duty to restore it to its right owner, who was a white friend of theirs. It is also needless to add that had the mule been found by someone of the whites living in these regions, I should never have seen it again.

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The savage Indians are frequently accused by the whites of dishonesty. There is, I think, some exaggeration in this; but as a rule however,

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M 177 577 to the extent that the Indian comes under the influence of the whites and gets »civilized», to that extent also he loses the virtue of honesty, as he loses many other virtues characteristic of him while he is in a state of nature. This again is chiefly due to the bad example given by the whites themselves. The latter steal from one another, infringe the proprietary rights of the Indians and commit other wrongs against them. The Indians, who are on this point comparable with children, naturally think they may do the same, and their very sense of justice seems to require that the same measure as is meted to them by the whites, they may themselves measure to the latter again.

M 273 578 627 The only occasion when crimes may be committed among the Choroti are during the great drinking-feasts. When the Indians are intoxicated with algaroba beer they easily begin to quarrel with one another, and these quarrels in extreme cases may end in homicide. Now the Indians certainly regard a homicide committed in a state of inebriation rather as an accident than as a crime, for the algaroba beer is sacred and an Indian inebriated by it is looked upon as possessed by a spirit and not in the ordinary sense responsible for his acts. But the Indians are anxious to prevent such accidents and this is above all the task of the women, who never themselves drink any intoxicating drinks. On two occasions I witnessed quarrels arising during the drinking-feasts. In one case an Indian, when excessively drunk, got mad and seized his bow and arrow to shoot another Indian on account of some old controversy. Immediately the women took hold of him, deprived him of his weapons, and compelled him to leave the scene of the feast and the whole village. He in fact left for an other village in the vicinity and remained absent for several days, when he was allowed to return to his home. The minds of the two adversaries were then perfectly tranquillized and there was no more grudge between them. In the other case also the women intervened and seized the weapons from the quarrelling men to prevent fights and manslaughter. It is usual in such cases that the offending party is sent away from the village or »exiled» for some time.

T 674 Among the more advanced *Tobas* thefts occasionally take place, but there is a question whether this phenomenon is not due to the influence of the whites, since the Tobas have on the whole been more in contact with civilization than the Choroti. T 685 In the case of smaller thefts there is no public punishment among the Tobas; the affair is left to the private concern of the person robbed and the thief. In more serious cases the Council

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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of the Old Men (*Eakachi*) intervenes, and they may subject the culprit to corporal punishment or exile him. T 685

Only among the Tobas can we speak of a sort of Court of Justice, the Council of the Old Men (*Eakachi*) mentioned before. These men have to intervene in disputes and quarrels, but at the great drinking-feasts they are — just as among the Choroti — assisted by the women who do their best to part the disputing men. For an outrage committed in a state of drunkenness extenuating circumstances are found and the offender is generally exiled for a longer or shorter time. If such deeds however are repeated and the Indian proves dangerous to his fellow-tribesmen, he may be expelled from the community for ever. This for instance was the fate of the great Toba chief Taycolique, as I have mentioned before. T 693 681

In other offences the culprit may, among the Tobas, be subjected to corporal punishment. A casual adultery is one of those comparatively slight offences which the offended Indian may himself punish if he likes, and a Toba man may in such cases beat his unfaithful wife. It is to be noticed that in a case of adultery the offended Indian does not generally punish the seducer but on the other hand frequently chastises his unfaithful wife, considering her to be more culpable. T 684

Real murders, as far as I know, never take place within the community, and blood-revenge is only practised in the feuds fought out between the different tribes. Blood-revenge forms part and parcel of the warfare of the Indians. M 674 721

CHAPTER X.

Visiting. Communication with other tribes. Trade.

648 Within the different sub-tribes there is frequent visiting between the families, and similarly there is frequent communication between those sub-tribes which live on a friendly footing with one another. The Choroti likewise have intercourse with certain foreign tribes, especially with the Ashluslay on the lower Pilcomayo and the Tapiete and the Avas on the northern course of the river. With the Mataco on the other hand, the Choroti have at times had strained relations, and the warlike Tobas they fear, avoiding as far as possible having anything to do with them. The friendly intercourse and trade between certain Chaco tribes, who perhaps live at great distances from one another, is of considerable ethnological interest.

Among all Indians, visiting is always a more or less ceremonial matter, 574 but in the Chaco these ceremonies are comparatively simple. In their everyday life, when meeting out on the plain or in the forest, the Indians do not use any particular words of salutation. On the other hand, when an Indian pays a visit to another house, and especially when he visits the [576] house of a neighbouring tribe, he, on entering, only pronounces a word equivalent to »I come», »I arrive»; in the Choroti and Mataco language this is *kanám*, in the Toba language *nóvyi*. The host only answers with a word which means, »it is good» (in the Choroti language *eis*, in the Mataco and Ashluslay language *is*, in the Toba *nóin* or *nõtta*). The guest can now take a seat at the door but keeps silence until he is spoken to. This is the rule in all cases where the guest is known and regarded as a friend. If algaroba beer and food is offered to him, this is a particular sign of friendship, and the guest may thereafter speak and move about freely as if he were at home. On the other hand, when the visitor is not welcome but regarded with hatred and suspicion the Indians turn the back and

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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remain silent, perhaps muttering some menacing words. This is particularly the way in which the Tobas receive undesired guests. The best thing for a visitor so received is to leave the Indians as soon as possible, since these treacherous and daring savages would not shrink from taking his life. M 574

When the Choroti guest leaves the house where he has paid a visit he always says: *yápeh*, or: *ayápeh*, »I go», or »I go back (to my own house)», to which the host only answers: *mah*, »go on!», »hurry on!». The Toba guest, on leaving, says *malhék*, or *kiuo* or *málhe'giuo*, (»I go», »I go back to my house»), the host answering with the word *hamóh* (»hurry on!»). C 576

The *Choroti* barter with those foreign tribes with whom they maintain friendly intercourse, their own most important article of exchange being dried fish. From the Guarani-speaking Tapiete Indians, and in some cases from the Avas, they receive especially the much appreciated cereal, maize, as well as the red *urucú*-paint, indispensable for painting the face and the body on festival occasions. The *urucú*-shrub, it should be noted, requires a purely tropical climate and does not grow in the Chaco. On the other hand the Choroti barter with the Ashluslay in the south, receiving from them among other things one of their most costly ornaments, a necklace consisting of small buttons cut out from snail's shells and strung closely together. Such a necklace is from three to six yards in length, and is highly valued not only as a pure ornament but also on account of the magical properties ascribed to it. The receiving of these necklaces from the Ashluslay seems to be but a transit-trade, for the latter Indians in their turn buy them from the tribes in the interior of the Chaco, probably from the Lenguas, who according to Mr. Grubb, make such necklaces. Mr. Grubb adds that »these strings of buttons are the money of the people» and that the value of a big necklace is one sheep.[1]) As a matter of fact, the Choroti when bartering with the Ashluslay pay one sheep each for these necklaces. C 439 C [435 436]

Of more interest are the commercial connections which the *Tobas* have with neighbouring tribes, especially with the Mataco-Nocténes in the west and the Avas in the north. At any rate there is frequent intercourse between the Bolivian Tobas and the Avas living at the Catholic missions Tarairi, Tihüipa, and Machareti. In connection with the visits which these Indians are in the habit of paying to the country of the Tobas, I had an excellent opportunity of studying primitive Indian trade. The T 648 439

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[1]) Grubb, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

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Avas, who belong to the great Guarani-group, mainly subsist by the cultivation of maize, a cereal which cannot be much cultivated in the dry pampas regions of the Chaco. The maize is therefore greatly appreciated by the primitive natives there. On the other hand, there is little fish to be caught in the small rivulets which flow though the country of the Avas, and the latter appreciate fish in proportion as it is scarce in their own land. But fishing, as we know, is the main livelihood of the Pilcomayo tribes. These different economic conditions have given rise to a regular sort of primitive trade or barter between the Avas and the Chaco tribes, especially the Tobas. This barter has essentially the character of an exchange of presents. A small party of Avas make the long journey from their own land to the land of the Tobas, bringing with them a couple of donkeys or horses laden with maize and sugar cane. The visit is paid to a village of which the inhabitants are known to the visitors, and generally lasts for about one week. The provisions which the Indians have brought with them are the visiting presents. A gourd of maize and some pieces of sugar cane are presented to each house. It is a point of honour among the Indians not to receive a present without giving something in return. The hosts therefore naturally give the guests what they themselves possess in abundance and what they know the latter will
[251] appreciate most, namely fish. The Chaco Indians always preserve their fish in a baked or dried condition, and at the fishing-season great stores of such dried fish are generally found in the huts. The Indian, in conformity with his natural tact, is of course anxious not to favour one friend more than another, and thus a regular system of bartering with definite measures has gradually developed. From what I observed, one small gourd of maize and two pieces of cane, each about one foot in length, answered to two dried middle-sized fishes, but in spite of any endeavour to be impartial, the measures could of course only be approximate. In return, fish is brought to the visitors from all houses, and the »present» is always paid for with the same amount of maize and sugar cane. This bartering goes on until the provisions which the visitors have brought with them are exhausted, when they leave with the acquired supplies of dried fish.

The Tobas, of course, also make similar visiting expeditions to the country of the Avas at the time of the maize harvest, bringing dried fish, and returning with provisions of the cereal so much appreciated.

That the Indian trade has essentially the character of an exchange of presents also appears from the fact that the Indians are only supposed

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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to barter with those whom they look upon as their friends and to whom they are paying the visit in question. It is not considered proper that outsiders, be they Indians of other villages or whites, should interfere.

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I may add that my own barter with the Indians always had the character of an exchange of presents. When I visited the Indian villages where I was known, I usually received presents of fish, fruits, etc., but it was always understood that these presents should be paid back in some form. Similarly, when I myself gave the Indians presents I usually received something in return, except when the presents — for instance the necessary presents of tobacco — were regarded as a natural tribute wich I had to pay for permission to stay in the village. Everyone who travels among Indians should bear in mind that Indian hospitality always means that something must be given in return, and that the traveller who neglects his duty on this point will necessarily be regarded as greedy.

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CHAPTER XI.

Warfare.

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The warlike character of the Chaco tribes has become almost proverbial. This reputation may be well-deserved as far as some natives of this hidden and savage country are concerned, but it does not hold true for instance of a tribe like the Choroti. The Choroti are by nature a peaceful people, and in the small quarrels they have at certain times fought out, for instance with the Mataco, they have displayed so little both of organization and personal courage that it is impossible to believe that they have ever been that ferocious and warlike people characterized by v. Rosen. On the other hand, such important tribes as the Lenguas and the Chamacoco in the Paraguayan Chaco have been characterized as great warriors by Mr. Grubb and Sr. Boggiani; on the Pilcomayo the Ashluslay, at the time when I came in contact with them, were still extremely savage and constantly at war with the Bolivian soldiers, and the Tobas are one of the most warlike tribes in the whole of South America.

The Mataco too, seem formerly to have been great warriors, at any rate more warlike than the peaceful Choroti. On this point Pelleschi writes on them: »The Indians love war; one may say so because they are very often engaged in fights. One war is followed by another, owing to the desire of the vanquished to revenge themselves, or the pleasure which the victors have taken in it. The motive of a war is fishing, or hunting, or the gathering of fruits on others' territory, the desire to take revenge for some offence, or the hope of taking spoils.[1])

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I have not seen the Tobas on the war-path, and I cannot therefore give the same minute description of their feuds and the customs they observe after a victory as I have given of the wars and victory feasts of

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[1]) Pelleschi, *Otto mesi nel Gran Ciacco*. p. 105.

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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the Jibaro Indians [1]). But the way of waging wars is about the same among all South American Indians, and in particular, the customs of the Tobas, as far as I know them, substantially agree with, for instance, those of the Lenguas as described by Grubb. As far as the victory feasts are concerned, the customs of the Chaco Indians are not in any way comparable with those of the Jibaros, which stand alone for their richness in complicated rites and ceremonies. T 726 171

The history of the Tobas shows that they have in former times been a real scourge to the neighbouring tribes, and the white settlers on the Pilcomayo some 30 years ago were constantly in danger of attack. In our days the Tobas have become more stationary and in the same degree more peaceful. The most warlike Toba tribe are the Pilagá in the Argentine Chaco who have waged war particularly against the Ashluslay on the other side of the Pilcomayo with a view to depriving them of the possession of that river. T 721

The most important causes of the wars among the Chaco Indians have been vendetta and trespass upon foreign land. Whereas blood-revenge does not occur within the same tribe, it is commonly enjoined by custom as a duty in the relation of the different tribes to each other. But behind the blood-feuds there are often earlier quarrels, especially about boundaries. In an inhospitable country like Chaco, where agriculture is rendered difficult and game is comparatively scarce, the possession of a river like the Pilcomayo, extremely rich in fish, is naturally of great importance. Many feuds have been fought out between the Chaco tribes for the possession of this river. Both for the sake of the river and for the sake of the pasture necessary for the flocks, the Chaco tribes have fixed limits dividing the territory of one tribe from that of another. These limits are commonly recognized, and trespassing, when it is wilfully done, may become a cause of war. Father Lozano relates that the Tobas living in the region of Tucumán used a kind of boundary mark consisting of long forked poles, and that upon the points of these poles they used to hang the skulls of those who had attempted to enter the territory of others. [2]) M 721 M [423] T [423]

Other causes of war among the Chaco tribes are the greed for acquiring the flocks and herds of another tribe and the desire to steal women. How far witchcraft, which has so often given rise to sanguinary feuds among the Indians, has played a part in the wars of the Tobas, I am not able to

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[1]) See my *Blood-Revenge, War, and Victory Feasts among the Jibaro Indians of Eastern Ecuador* (Smithsonian Institution. Bureau of Ethnology. Bull. 79. 1923).

[2]) Lozano, *op. cit.* I. 99.

2:Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

M 721 say. The Tobas certainly believe in witchcraft, but the rôle of this superstition as an originator of wars has evidently not been equally great as, for instance, among the Jibaros.

M 726 When an attack against an enemy is planned, the old men of each tribe (*eakáchi*) together with the chiefs (*alyáinek*) assemble every night to deliberate in a special place outside the village. Much algaroba beer is drunk on this occasion in order that the deliberations may lead to a happy result. In the shade of a big algaroba tree the old men invoke the »good spirit» (*peyák nóin*) so that he may give the warriors victory and protect them in the coming fight. The younger Toba men perform the dance *Nomi* for several days. Each sub-tribe marches out to war headed by its chief. But since these chiefs are often aged persons, too weak to perform their duty in the expedition successfully, a special leader is as a rule appointed by the old men when a war expedition is planned. This leader is generally a younger brother or some other relation of a chief, and he must of course have previously distinguished himself by courage and other warlike qualities.

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Photo W. Hanssen.

Young Toba Indian mounted on muleback. Argentine Chaco.

The war weapons of the Tobas were formerly the bow and arrow and
T 411 177 the club, made of hard *palo santo* wood. The latter, we are told, were as heavy as if they had been made of iron. But the Tobas early learnt to know the European horse and used horses in their wars also. According to Campos, the Tobas who fought on horseback did not use bow and arrows but long lances [2]). Lances of this kind are still used for hunting the wild
T 714 302 boar. The Toba warriors also used armour of tiger-skin and had the head adorned with plumes. Body-painting, moreover, formed an important

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[2]) Campos, op. cit. p. 250.

part of the personal adornment for a war expedition. Father Lozano, 302 describing the Tobas some two hundred years ago, says that they used 714 to colour both the face and the body in time of war. Then »they painted themselves like tigers and other formidable animals, the figures of which they imagined would make them more formidable to their enemies»[1]). The Tobas of the present time, before they march out to battle, blacken the face with charcoal, whereas the breast, the stomach, and the arms are painted red with *urucú*. The chief Taycolique expressly told me that the Indians paint their body and face before a battle »in order to get more strength»; but at the same time they probably have the idea that this body-painting will inspire their enemies with fear.

Body-painting as a war custom is practised by all Indian tribes in [171] South America and, as I have tried to show elsewhere, it is mainly resorted to for superstitious reasons. The red and black paint is believed to give the body strength and to protect it against the evil spirits who move about in the battle. But among the Tobas, who have been a tribe of professional 701 warriors, measures of a permanent nature were formerly taken to give the men the strength and power of resistance needed in battle. 302 These measures formed part of the initiatory rites performed with youths when they were received among the warriors, and all through they had a magical character. They mainly consisted of a peculiar arrangement of the hair, at which I have hinted before, and were begun while the boy was still a child. Charlevoix relates that the ancient Tobas, whom he calls Guaycurú, used to pull off the hair of a new-born male child as fast as it grew, with the exception of what was necessary to form a small crest of hair on the top of the head and two thin circles around it. When the boy was sixteen or seventeen years old he was initiated as a warrior. The ceremony was performed by some distinguished veteran who began to pull out the hair from one of the two circles. Thereupon he pricked him on various parts of the body with a sharp-pointed bone, and with the flowing blood smeared his head. Then he seized the hair-crest in the middle of the head, pulled it with all his might as tightly as possible, and wrapped it in a net. Lastly the whole body of the novice was smeared with a certain clay. When the man was twenty years old he was admitted among the older warriors. On this occasion his hair was again dressed; the whole crest of hair was cut off and the remaining circle was reduced until it was only one inch wide. He moreover painted himself from head to foot in various

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[1]) Lozano, op. cit. I. 99.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
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701 colours, tied a band of red twist round his head, adorned himself with
302 plumes, etc. 1) To understand these rites properly, we must know what initiation in general means to the Indian, and in particular what initiation into the military profession meant to a warlike race such as the Guaycurú. A warrior must be a man of great physical and spiritual power of resistance for he has to fight not only against visible enemies but also against invisible malignant spirits, and the initiation aims essentially at hardening him against the latter. The peculiar arrangement of the hair, which at every initiation was more and more reduced, was due to certain superstitious ideas about the hair, current among all South American Indians and common in a lower stage of culture. Similarly the
[789] red cotton band tied round the warrior's head, the red paint or clay applied to his body, and the blood smeared on his hair were like charms or amulets intended to protect him against evil influences.

Mr. Grubb, speaking of the wars of the Lengua Indians, points out
726 that in war the Indians do not, as is generally believed, act like a disorganized mob, every man fighting for himself, but work on carefully planned lines. Some men are sent out as spies, with the object of coming as close to the enemy as possible and getting all the intelligence about him they can. In their actions they exercize the greatest prudence, rarely fighting in a body, and trying to overthrow the enemy with as little loss of life to themselves as possible 2). This, I believe, holds true of all South American Indians, at any rate of the Tobas. Espionage, treachery, assassination, and sudden attacks, nearly always by night, play the main part in their feuds. The Tobas generally choose a moonlight night for their
[821] attacks, believing that the waxing moon will in some mysterious way promote the undertaking. No important enterprise is embarked on during the »dying» moon, since at that time it would fall out badly. The enemy village is surrounded in silence, whereupon the Indians from their ambuscades make a sudden attack upon it, enter the houses and kill the inhabitants. In their wars with the whites the Tobas have frequently availed themselves of the method of setting fire to the house they want to attack by means of fire-brands thrown on the roof. If the Indians succeed in
727 taking the inhabitants unawares, all grown men and old women who are not able to escape are killed, the younger women and the children alone being spared. The women become the wives of the victors, in the

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1) Charlevoix, *Historia del Paraguay*, I. 135 sqq.

2) Grubb, *op. cit.* pp. 107, 108.

first place, of course, of the chiefs. The children are adopted as members of the tribe, and they readily amalgamate with it, the more so as the captives are generally well treated and admitted to equal privileges with their conquerors. T 727

All Indian tribes of the Pilcomayo were formerly scalp-hunters and head-hunters, and some of them still practise this custom. The head of the slain enemy was cut off, the scalp stripped from the scull, and both were kept as a sort of trophy. Shortly before I arrived at the Pilcomayo in 1911, the *Ashluslay* had succeeded in killing nineteen Bolivian soldiers who were marching down to one of the military settlements on the river. The heads of the young men had been cut off and taken home by the Indians. Later on it was reported that their scalps or skulls, fixed on long poles, decorated the entrance of the main Indian village, being used at the great feasts as drinking-cups which were believed to inspire the drinkers with courage. For my own part I have not been able to gather more particulars about these head-hunting practices of the Chaco Indians, nor has any other traveller given information on this point. On the war customs observed by the Argentine Mataco-Vejos, the Italian traveller Pelleschi makes the following statement: »Whosoever kills an enemy wears as a trophy, if he has time to secure it, the scalp with the hair, the ears, and possibly a fold of skin from the back of the neck. He forms it to the shape of a cup by means of a bulrush or a flexible twig, which he binds and stitches all round the edge; then, while still bloody, he fills it with liquor, and holding it by the hair, passes it round to his companions, who empty it as they drink in honour of the victor and in scorn of the vanquished. Another way is to hold the scalp by the edge and pour out the liquor in drops over the hair and jaws.»[1] M 727

As to the *Tobas*, I have gathered that when they return home after a successful attack a great feast is held, when the spoils taken on the war expedition are brought forth in triumph, dances are performed, and algaroba beer is drunk to excess. Dancing forms an important part of the feast. The victory dance of the Tobas is *Nomi* which is performed by the younger warriors during the day. A special dance is performed round the scalps, hung on high poles in the middle of the village, and beer is drunk from the skulls, but I have no more details about these ceremonies. T 727 535

Nordenskiöld, who during his travels in the Chaco came across a scalp taken by the *Mataco* in one of their wars, mentions in passing that M 727 562

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[1] Pelleschi, *Eight Months on the Gran Chaco*, p. 80.

M 727 562 »before the Indians parted with their trophy they demanded that their old women should be allowed to sing and dance with it». It is a pity that Nordenskiöld, dominated by his exclusive interest to obtain a rare Indian »curiosity», did not avail himself of the excellent opportunity to inquire as to the ideas which the Indians connected with this scalp-dance of the women. We must look for an explanation from other sources. In the account I have given of the war customs of the Jibaros I have shown M [778] that they are wholly founded on magical ideas. The hair and head of the slain enemy is regarded as the seat of his soul or spirit and therefore is full of mysterious power. In fact, through the dances and other ceremonies performed with the scalp or head, the trophy is turned into a fetish which will promote the luck of the victor in various respects. The fact that the women play the most important rôle at the scalp-feasts — which seems to be almost a general rule — is also due to special magical ideas. The most important of the beneficial effects ascribed to the trophy is that it promotes fertility and renders the domestic animals prolific. Since, according to the belief of uncivilized peoples, woman is, as it were, the symbol of fertility, not only in the human world, but also in the animal world and in nature, it is reasonable to assume that women perform the scalp-dance precisely to promote fertility by means of the lucky object. Such is the case for instance among the Jibaros, where the dance of »supplication» round the trophy is professedly resorted to with a view to making the harvest abundant and the domestic animals prolific. Evidently the Chaco Indians entertain similar ideas. Since the head or the scalp is full of spiritual power we can also easily understand that the Indians believe themselves to be »inspired with courage» by drinking from the trophy.

T 622 554 727 Special honour is paid among the Tobas to chiefs who have carried a war to a successful end. The ordinary chiefs receive confirmation in their dignity by the Council of the Old Men, and the young temporary leader, elected for that particular war expedition, is made an ordinary chief in recognition of his merits.

RELIGION.

Chapter XII.

Belief in gods and spirits in general.

I have mentioned before that the religion of the Chaco Indians is a subject strangely neglected by all who have travelled among these natives and studied their customs. Thus, in regard to the Tobas, the naturalist Azara arrived at the conclusion that they have no religion at all, and d'Orbigny rested satisfied with stating that »their religious beliefs are very limited», whereas the Catholic missionary Cardús considered the study of these things useless. Similarly, nothing — apart from the data published by myself — has been related of the religious ideas of the Choroti and Ashluslay. Almost the only author on the Chaco Indians who gives us some information about their religion is Barbrooke Grubb, but he deals exclusively with the ideas and customs of the Lenguas of Paraguay. 114

The main reason for this deficiency of our information respecting one of the most important sides of native culture is obvious. The subject of religion, if one has a real study of it in view, requires special training and a prolonged stay among the natives, and these conditions have been lacking in the case of most »ethnographic» travellers in the Chaco, not to speak of naturalists or ordinary travellers. But even to one who devotes special attention to the spiritual aspect of Indian culture the study of such a subject as religion is beset with great difficulties, and the study can hardly ever become exhaustive. Although this may undoubtedly be said of my own contribution also, I venture to believe that in the following account at any rate the most important religious ideas and customs of the Pilcomayo Indians are mentioned.

The lowest tribes of the Pilcomayo, the Choroti, Mataco, and — as far 776
as I have been able to ascertain — the Ashluslay, have no belief in a sup- 773
reme god, nor any ideas of a creation. Beliefs of this kind are extremely

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913) 1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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rare in all South America, and in the Chaco they are found only among such an advanced tribe as the Tobas, and, in a certain sense, among the Lenguas. The latter Indians, according to Mr. Grubb, ascribe the creation of all things and of man to a being disguised as a beetle, but this being is without moral attributes and in fact is only of purely mythological interest. As to the Tobas, they believe in two high gods or Supreme Beings, who — just as is the case with the Creator-Beetle of the Lenguas — only figure in their mythology but play no rôle in their practical religion. Moreover, the ideas they entertain about these Supreme Beings are not consistent but seem to represent two different stages in the evolution of their religious thought. These beings are especially spoken of as the creators of the world and of mankind. According to the apparently older version, all things were made by a bad deity Kaloaraik, »The Evil One», who created the world as miserable and full of suffering as it actually is in the mind of the Tobas. Again, according to the younger version, the world owes its origin to a good deity Peritnalik, who created things good and useful and thenceforward took benevolent care of mankind.

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Since no kind of worship is paid to these Supreme Beings they have more interest from a mythological than from a religious point of view. I shall therefore deal with them again in a later chapter in connection with other myths of the Tobas.

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In practical religion spirits of a lower order play the main rôle. Of these spirits some are in their nature good, others again bad, but — as is usual among savage peoples — the latter impress the mind of the Indians more than the former and are therefore more conspicuous in their religion. The Choroti call these spirits *mõhsek*, the Ashluslay *sitché*, the Mataco *aittah* or *nahút*, and the Tobas *peyák*. In examining the different applications of this belief in spirits, we find that to the primitive Indians it is obviously of great practical importance: it compensates them for the lack of a notion of natural laws. Stupendous phenomena of nature, events otherwise unaccountable to them, especially disease and death, are explained as their mysterious actions. There are spirits inhabiting inanimate objects of nature and heavenly bodies, there are spirits embodied in animals and plants, and lastly, there are spirits who are not particularly attached to things animate or inanimate but have an independent existence, hovering about in the forests or on the plains, or in the air, causing such phenomena as thunder and lightning, eclipses of the sun and the moon, drought, devastating hurricanes, etc. Worst of course are those demons who are regarded as the causes of disease and death, and

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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in their magical dances and conjurations the Indians as a matter of fact C
most often deal with these particular evil spirits. 776

These are features common to the religious beliefs of all Indians of the Chaco; indeed they are found among all South American Indians. But even in the Chaco this general belief in spirits appears in somewhat
different forms among different tribes. The *Choroti* fancy that the spirits, C
mōhsek, in their external appearance have the shape of old, withered 776
men (*kihīlahs*). They are, in the imagination of the Indians, provided with wings, which enable them to move rapidly through the air. Owing to their bird-like appearance the spirits are also called *ahuéna* (»the birds».). They are countless in number, mostly invisible, and as a general rule evilly disposed towards mankind. I never met an Indian who professed to have *seen* a *mōhsek*, but nearly all say that they have *heard* their voices at night. One peculiarity of the demons of the Chaco Indians is that they only exist at night. As soon as darkness sets in the Choroti Indian fears mysterious dangers from the *mōhsek*, who are then believed to draw near the villages in great numbers and even to enter into the huts, visiting the inhabitants with sickness and death. This is the reason why a traveller living with the Choroti can hear from some house nearly every night the low chant of some old man accompanied by the dull sound of the rattle gourd, *pelīte*, with which he tries to conjure and keep off the supernatural pests. At daybreak however the spirits are supposed to leave
for the forests and the plains — with a piping or whistling sound, the C
Indians explained to me, which they are very clever in imitating. For [534]
this purpose the Choroti use a special kind of round whistle which they
generally wear hanging round the neck as an ornament. At their religious C
dances they produce, from time to time, shrill whistling sounds with [535]
these whistles, professedly with a view to conjuring the *mōhsek*. The Indians believe that they can keep supernatural beings at bay by imitating them in their external appearance or their sounds.

In the Chaco many weird sounds are heard at night which are apt to C
fill the natives with superstitious fear. The Choroti frequently told me 776
about the »nightly whistling of the spirits» (*yap mōhsek ahnáh*). The pecu- 825
liar piping or whistling which is most often identified with the sound of
the spirits is, I believe, produced by certain insects living on the stems or C
branches of the trees. The spirit of the tusca tree was specially mentioned [824]
to me, but this spirit is said to be a »good» being.

The idea of the Choroti, that the spirits have the shape of old men, C
has given rise to a peculiar and cruel custom. They do not allow their 776

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776 old men to die a natural death, but when they grow very weakly and
888 sickly they kill them with an arrow-shot in the heart, whereupon they
burn them with all their property instead of burying them, which among
766 the Choroti is the general mode of disposing of the remains of the dead.
The reason which they gave me for this custom was that if an old man is
allowed to die a natural death he will be changed into an evil demon
(*mõhsek*), who will rage in the village and kill all the people. This, according
to their idea, can be prevented by giving the old men a premature,
violent death.[1]) In order to understand this custom we must, moreover,
[754] take into consideration that to the mind of these Indians *all* aged men are
more or less versed in the magic art, *i. e.* are sorcerers, and the spirits of
sorcerers are specially feared.

The fact that old men and sorcerers are believed to be transformed
775 after death into evil *mõhsek* seems to suggest that these spirits or demons
are nothing but disembodied human souls, who have in the after-life been changed into supernatural and mostly evilly disposed beings. As a matter of fact, the death-spirit residing in the grave where a dead body has been buried is called *mõhsek* by the Choroti. Like most other primitive peoples the Choroti fear the burial-places because they fear coming in contact with the spirits haunting these places. It seems therefore evident that at any rate the souls of certain persons are changed into *mõhsek* after death. The word *mõhsek* may therefore be best translated into 'ghost'. The Indians only use it of the disembodied souls or spirits of dead men, but not of the shadow-like »double» of a living person, for which they have no particular word. Even when speaking of a recently departed person they generally simply use the expression *yäl*, *i.e.* »the dead one». *Mõhsek* particularly seems to have reference to the spirits of men who died long ago, and these spirits as a rule are more evilly disposed and more feared than the spirits of Indians recently departed.

776 The Choroti, like other Chaco Indians, do not deify inanimate objects of nature to the same extent as many other South American tribes. Yet

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[114] [1]) Nordenskiöld's categoric statement as to the practice of infanticide and parricide among the Choroti therefore is not correct. (»Der Mord beschränkt sich auf den Kinder- und Elternmord»; and: »Wenn ein Indianer seine alte blinde Mutter oder seinen verkrüppelten Vater tötet, so befreit er sie selbst von einem Leben das ihnen eine Last ist und sich selbst von einer Extramühe im Kampfe ums Dasein.» (*Indianerleben*, p. 38). As I have stated above, the killing of parents is limited to old men, and this custom must wholly be explained from the superstition of the Indians. Infanticide again is limited to the cases mentioned by me in a previous chapter.

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there are several evidences of a nature animism, although as a general rule only such objects and phenomena as especially strike their imagination or with which some remarkable incidents are connected, are incidentally or permanently looked upon as being animated by spirits. There are evil demons in the sky, which among other things cause such strange phenomena as eclipses of the moon, of which the Choroti have the same idea as the Mataco and most other Chaco tribes. Other evil spirits of the sky cause drought, which in the Chaco forms the greatest obstacle to a successful cultivation of the fields. The demons keep the rain back, and the Indians in consequence try, during the dry season, to conjure them by drumming, shaking rattles and chanting so as to compel them to release rain. On the other hand, there are demons operating in the violent thunderstorms, although these are generally accompanied by torrents of rain. The Choroti believe that thunder and the flash of lightning are caused by a great number of *mõhsek* who are rushing through the air and making an onset upon the village. These spirits are more often called *ahuéna*, »the birds», and thunder and lightning are therefore generally called by the Indians simply *ahuéna*, although the proper name in the Choroti language is *súntini*. Every time a burst of thunder is heard, the Indians, sitting in their huts, begin to shout and scream loudly, in order to frighten away the molesting supernatural visitors. There are evil spirits in the violent whirlwinds and sand-storms so common in the Chaco, as well as in the cold south wind, *niúk*, which during the dry season sweeps over the plains and produces rheumatism and chills among the natives, badly equipped as they are against cold weather. The warm north wind again, *úkine*, is sent by »good» spirits. Thus the radical contrast between the cold south wind and the warm north wind, both of which are sent by supernatural agents, has been to the Choroti the main reason for making a distinction between two of the four cardinal points. 776 [821] [789] 776 821 [823]

Spirits, *mõhsek*, are also believed to animate *trees* and *plants* — bad spirits poisonous and harmful plants, good spirits the beneficial and useful ones. The ideas which the Indians entertain about plant spirits and the customs to which they give rise, are substantially the same among all the tribes, and I shall presently give an account of them. 776 824

The Choroti also believe in *animal* demons. Thus they share the belief, held by all Indians in tropical and subtropical America, that a jaguar which attacks Indians or appears under unusual circumstances, is a »man-tiger» *i.e.* a man, generally a sorcerer, who has assumed the shape of this beast. Even in his lifetime a sorcerer may incidentally change 776 825 754

776 himself into a jaguar and, appearing in this disguise, kill people. Similarly,
an evil wizard is believed to be able to send his soul into a horse, in which
754 shape he will kill the person whom he wishes to bewitch. The horse in
825 fact is the particular shape in which the tutelary spirit of a sorcerer is
believed to appear, and is therefore looked upon as a demoniacal animal. Of other animals which are looked upon with superstitious fear the deer must be especially mentioned. This shy and innocent animal is regarded as an evil spirit, a *mōhsek*, and its flesh is never eaten by the Choroti. On this point these Indians share a belief which, curiously enough, is met with among many tribes in different parts of South America. In the noiseless movements of this animal and the mysterious rapidity with which it disappears into the forest there is in fact something »ghost-like», which is apt to awaken superstitious awe in primitive minds.

754 Just as a sorcerer is supposed to be able to change himself into a jaguar
when he wishes to harm other people, so he is also believed occasionally
825 to assume, for the same purpose, the shape of a venomous reptile, for
instance that of a rattlesnake. The bite of a venomous snake is generally attributed to the mysterious operation of an evil wizard.

Of spirits inhabiting what we should call inanimate objects the spirits
776 of the *stones* are of particular interest. In order to understand the
823 ideas which the Choroti entertain in this respect it should be borne
in mind that in the interior parts of the Gran Chaco, and particularly in the country inhabited by the Choroti, stones are extremely rare or almost unobtainable. It is in part due to this fact that the Choroti regard stones and pebbles in general with superstitious dread and would never, for instance, put on a necklace in which a stone of some kind entered as a decoration. The reason which they gave me for this aversion was that an evil spirit, a *mōhsek*, dwells in the small stone and would infallibly invade the person who hung it on himself. The explanation was, moreover, added, that when a sorcerer bewitches an Indian he avails himself of a pebble-stone which he throws against his victim making him fall ill and
[755] die. Similarly, when the medicine-man cures the patient, he extracts
the disease-demon in the form of a small stone. In other words, stones are shunned because they form one of the magic arrows which the sorcerers use to kill or harm their enemies.

753 The theory which the Choroti have formed about *sickness* and *disease*
has appeared from some of the above statements. Sickness, like epidemic disease, is always due to supernatural operation. It is caused by a demon, a *mōhsek*, directed by a human sorcerer. Wizards cause sickness by

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C 753 throwing spells embodied in certain material objects, small stones, cactus thorns, bones, certain insects, etc. We should say that it is the stone, thorn, etc. that causes the pains felt by the victim, but its real cause is the mysterious demon embodied in the object. This appears most clearly from the conjuration with which the medicine-man tries to remove the evil and in which the demon is directly addressed.

An epidemic is likewise caused by evil spirits, but independently of the operation of a wizard. Among these spirits there are real death-demons, who in the imagination of the Indians wander about the village carrying off one Indian after the other. The Indians are aware that these diseases, among which are small-pox, malarial fever, dysentery, etc., are imported by the whites, and they consider that their own medicine-men are powerless against them.

M 776 [177] The animistic beliefs of the *Mataco* are much the same as those of the Choroti, but it is evident that the Mataco-Nocténes of Bolivia have been considerably influenced in their religion by the Tobas, as is the case in their general culture. The Mataco make a distinction between two kinds of lower spirits. The commonest kind of spirit, although not the most feared, are those whom the Indians call *aittáh*, generally adding the attribute *slámsa* or *slahsa* which means »small». These are of exactly the same nature as the majority of the spirits whom the Choroti call *mōhsek*, although in external appearance they more resemble the *peyák* of the Tobas. Whereas in the imagination of the Choroti the *mōhsek* have the shape of old men, the *aittáh* of the Mataco — and similarly the *peyák* of the Tobas — have the shape of young boys (*nátses*), but at the same time they are provided with wings, so that they can move as rapidly as the wind from one place to another. They are invisible, countless in number (*vúh*) and evilly-disposed (*tavakái*) towards mankind. *Vúh aittáh tavakái* »there are numberless evil spirits», the Mataco are in the habit of saying when speaking of the world of demons. The ideas they entertain about them are the same as those of the Choroti. During the day these demons are not dangerous to men, for then they have retired far away to the plains and the forests. But as soon as night draws near they arrive in great numbers, although not in visible shape, dancing round the villages and huts which they like to visit with sickness and misfortune. The Indians try to keep them off by dancing, when they imitate the very movements which they fancy the demons make, by drumming, and by performing conjurations to cure patients already attacked by the demons.

776 The second class of spirits are called *nahút*. They are the most feared
because they are believed to cause death, the phenomenon most feared
761 by primitive man. Being particularly death demons, the *nahút* are frequently called *nahút yil*. *Yil* is the Mataco word for death. Every death is due to a special *nahút yil*, and of course every mortal disease, or every disease which naturally ends in death unless the art of the medicine-man can prevent it. If one asks a Mataco Indian what a *nahút* is like, he will answer that it is a thin, shadow-like human figure; it is the double of the dead man. The *nahút* live in the earth, where the dead are interred, but they frequently leave this dwelling-place and fly through the air, approach the habitations of the living and inflict mortal disease upon them.

753 Every grave disease is due to a special *nahút*. Thus for instance,
the intermittent fever which attacks people during the cold season, is
776 caused by a *nahút teláh*. The Mataco, however, are of opinion that it is
[755] possible for a medicine-man to cure the patient by incantations in four
or five days. The worst *nahút* of all is the small-pox, *otoahtyá*, a disease which has caused terrible ravages among the Mataco at different periods. The art of the medicine-man is powerless against this dreadful demon. Therefore, when an epidemic of small-pox breaks out in a Mataco village the inhabitants know of no other remedy against the evil than to burn the whole village, to abandon the place and the sick ones, and to depart to another place. When an Indian is attacked by the small-pox, the Mataco told me, the *nahút* seizes the patient at the throat and presses it together with such violence that the tongue hangs out from the mouth, the eyes are thrust out from their orbits, the face swells up, and the patient dies.

If in a village, during a certain time, several deaths have occurred, especially if an epidemic has been raging, the Mataco are in the habit of saying: »That place has been visited by many *nahút yil*». On the other hand, if in a certain village there has been no death and no disease for a long time, the Indians say: »In this place there are, at present, no *nahút yil*». There is practically no disease and no illness which is not directly or indirectly ascribed by the Indians either to an *aittáh slamsa* or a *nahút yil*. Slight disorders and illnesses which are cured in a couple of days are ascribed to the *aittáh*, mortal diseases to the *nahút*. If a Mata-
[752] co for instance breaks his leg, or if some other misfortune happens to him
which does not end fatally, he is of opinion that he has been attacked by
776 a »small» *aittáh*. Similarly, there are *aittáh* operating in stupendous natural
821 phenomena, in hurricanes, in torrential rains, in thunder and lightning,

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A Toba woman spinning wool. Bolivia.

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The house of the Toba chief Niradyák (»Alligator»). Bolivia.

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Toba SI12

M 776 821 in drought, in eclipses, etc. Thunder and lightning, for instance, are caused by the demons called *aittáh tavakái pähłai* (the »thunder demons»), which pass in great numbers through the air or above the clouds. Eclipses of the moon, on the other hand, are attributed to a demon called *aittáh hayáh* which is supposed to prey upon the moon. The Mataco try to frighten away both the thunder-demons and the demon eclipsing the moon by shouting loudly and making a noise, and by beating drums.

M 775 774 The same may be said of the nature of the *aittáh* and the *nahút* as has been said of the *möhsek* of the Choroti. It seems to me probable that they are in their origin nothing but spirits of the dead or disembodied human souls. From this point of view, I believe, Pelleschi is right when he says that the religion of the Mataco can be characterized as essentially a worship of souls. But there are disembodied souls of different kinds. The Mataco word for »soul» is *kasītah*. It is the soul that detaches itself from the body, temporarily during dreams, permanently in death. As a death-spirit the *kasītah* is generally the object of fear. Of these death-spirits some, which are particularly evil-minded, become *nahút* or personifications of mortal diseases, whereas others have become personifications of curable illnesses and lesser evils. It is a well known fact that the spirits of certain persons — especially of sorcerers and persons who have died a violent death — are greatly feared, and just such spirits are likely to turn into that particular kind of demon whom the Mataco call *nahút*. M [764] The fact that graves are regarded as the dwelling-places of these demons confirms the conclusion that the *nahút* are in their nature nothing but disembodied human souls.

T 776 As to the **Tobas**, I have already mentioned that they call the spirits *peyák*. Like the Mataco, the Tobas fancy that these spirits appear in the shape of small boys (*nätolik*), and in daily life, when speaking of these beings, they more often use the word *nätolik* than the word *peyák*. Although the spirits in the main have human form, they at the same time resemble birds, and more particularly ostriches. At any rate the Tobas informed me that »the *peyák* have wings, large like those of the ostrich» — an idea quite natural to a people who even identify living men with ostriches. Still they are mostly invisible to the human eye; only the medicine-men who are endowed with a special clear-sightedness can see them and enter into communication with them. The whole world swarms with these mysterious beings, who are regarded as the causes of all evils that befall man. Everything that has been stated on this

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
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point of the spirits and demons of the Mataco and the Choroti as workers of evil also holds true of the *peyák* of the Tobas. 776

The curious idea that the evil spirits have the shape of small boys (or girls) has probably given rise to a cruel custom which, according to the Catholic missionary Cardús, was formerly practised by the Tobas. 776 858 If a young boy or girl up to the age of ten to twelve years became ill, and the medicine-man declared that he or she could not recover, the patient was simply killed by the blow of a club, even if he or she was still able to walk [1]). This practice was in all probability due to the belief that such children would be changed into evil *peyák* if they were allowed to die a natural death, and that this could be prevented by killing them. This explanation is confirmed by the analogous custom of the Choroti, mentioned before, of killing old men before they die a natural death. The Tobas also kill sickly and deformed infants directly after birth, and it [847] is not improbable that this practice is connected with the same superstition.

The Tobas deify inanimate objects of nature to the same extent as 776 other Chaco tribes. Of fetishism there are only a few traces. Objects [778] and phenomena are regarded as animated by spirits (*peyák*) in the same degree as they attract the attention of the Indians by their effects and by remarkable incidents associated with them. Thus for instance, near the village Tseihatanyi on the Pilcomayo there is a great lagoon which according to the belief of the Indians is inhabited by *peyák* and regarded with superstitious fear. The reason appeared to be that some time ago the fish in this lagoon died from some unknown cause. The Indians could not account for this strange incident except by assuming that the lagoon was haunted by evil spirits. Violent tempests and hurricanes, such as [821] often occur in the Chaco, as well as thunder and lightning are, according to the idea of the Tobas, directly caused by malignant *peyák*. One night during my sojourn among the Tobas a violent thunder-storm swept over the village where I was staying, stirring up clouds of dust from the river against the houses, partly destroying them, and blighting the chañar trees which were just flowering. The Indians declared that the hurricane was caused by a great number of *peyák* who were attacking the village. The following night the Tobas recited a prayer and performed certain conjurations with their rattle gourds in order to keep off the demons and prevent them from repeating their disastrous operation.

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[1]) Cardús, *op. cit.* p. 263.

776 821 The thunder (*dimyí*) and the lightning (*kahonrá*) are explained in the same way: a great number of spirits are passing through the clouds producing the thunder and the flash of lightning. Whirlwinds, which are often seen to move along the ground raising pillars of dust and damaging the habitations, are regarded as the passing of the spirits. The Tobas are in the habit of saying of such whirlwinds: »There goes a *peyák* dancing in the dust». Drought caused by prolonged absence of rain is ascribed to the same supernatural causes: it is due to the *peyák* who are seated in the clouds and keep the rain back. These demons the Tobas do not try to expel by their usual incantations, considering that the sky is too far off for the spirits to be influenced.

The idea that the evil spirits are particularly in action at night time is common to all Chaco tribes and most South American Indians. The belief is not difficult to understand since the association of darkness with the mysterious and destructive powers of nature is quite natural to an undeveloped mind. Moreover, in Chaco heavy thunderstorms and hurricanes usually take place at night, and most diseases — especially diseases of the chest and the throat, from which the natives often suffer — are worse in the night than during the day.

775 The etymology of the word *peyák* is obscure, and the Tobas could give me no information as to the origin of these spirits. Considering that the *peyák* closely resemble the ghostly beings whom the Mataco call *nahút* and the Choroti *mõhsek*, it is probable that they have the same origin as these and are simply disembodied human souls. The belief that small boys who die a natural death are changed into *peyák* confirms this explanation. At any rate, the death-spirits form one important class of supernatural beings who people the spiritual world of [774] the Tobas. The word for »soul» is in their language *kadepakál* which literally means »our (*i. e.* the human) shadow», *pakál* being the Toba word for »shadow». The very etymology of the word indicates how the Indians conceive the »free-soul» which is reflected in the water or in a mirror, which separates from the body temporarily or for ever in dreams or death. Neither in their external appearance nor in the effects they are able to produce on account of their supernatural powers, do disembodied souls (*kadepakál*) essentially differ from the *peyák*. The religion of the Tobas therefore has most probably — like that of other Chaco tribes — originated in the deification and worship of human souls. This hypothesis gains strength by an examination of what we may call the

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»animal-worship» of the Indians, or their belief in the reincarnation of the dead in animals. 775

Whereas it is not, perhaps, correct to speak of a real »worship» of animals among the Tobas, yet on this point they hold various superstitious beliefs. Thus of the great carnivorous beast, the jaguar, they have the same idea as many other South American tribes, namely, that it may serve as the abode or disguise of certain evil spirits of human origin. If, for instance, the proper funeral rites have not been performed for a dead person, there is, according to the idea of the Tobas, the danger that he might be changed into a man-tiger, and this belief is confirmed when — as frequently happened in former times — the tiger visits a village at night-time and kills or carries off some one of its inhabitants. Evil sorcerers particularly are believed to appear as man-tigers, not only after their death but even in their life-time. Even the souls of dead women, who have not been buried with the proper rites, may be reincarnated as such beasts. The jaguar (*kidók*, *nahõre*) is an animal that frequently figures both in the religion and the myths of the Tobas. 776 825 [764 775]

There is the same superstition with regard to the ostrich, in so far as departed souls are sometimes supposed to transmigrate into these big birds. Moreover, the idea seems to be that only the souls of *men* reincarnate themselves in ostriches; the bird has therefore, as it were, become the symbol of the Toba men. In this connection I may recall the fact that the Quichua-speaking peoples in the region of Tucumán in Argentine formerly called the Tobas by the name Juris, *i. e.* 'Ostriches' on account of their running speed.[1]) *Juri* or *suri* is the Quichua word for 'ostrich'. Similarly the neighbours of the Tobas in Chaco, the Mataco, call the Tobas *Uánhlai*, an appellation which can only be translated into 'the Ostrich-men', *uánhla* being the Mataco word for 'ostrich'. Attention may also be drawn to the curious Toba custom that at the feast, with which the puberty ceremonies in honour of a chief's daughter are closed, the men must only eat the flesh of ostrich, whereas the women must only eat the flesh of armadillo. [881]

The Toba myths also speak of the transmigration of souls into other animals and birds, into herons, deer, boars, ant-bears, rabbits, etc. Parrots, and especially the small parrot called *cata* in Spanish, are looked upon with superstition. The evil spirits may also take the shape of snakes, and as such are especially dangerous to young women bathing in the river. 775 825

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[1]) See Lafone Quevedo, *Arte de la lengua Toba*. La Plata, 1893, p. 5.

775 A Toba myth tells of a young girl who was supernaturally made pregnant by a snake while bathing, and who thereafter gave birth to a number 825 of snakes. When girls have their first menstruation they must be careful to cover their body well, because evil spirits are trying to enter them through the genital parts in the form of snakes, in which case either supernatural conception, or disease and death will follow. Evil demons, and especially the spirits of the dead are also supposed to enter into fishes. Hence the women are bound to abstain from eating fish for some time after a death. On the whole, the superstitions with regard to animals appear particularly in the food restrictions imposed upon the members of the community on certain occasions. I shall treat of these restrictions in more detail later on.

The heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon, and the stars are, among 821 the Chaco Indians not objects of worship and not deified. It is true that there are some statements to the contrary, but they seem to me to involve an exaggeration. Thus of the Argentine Mataco, Pelleschi relates that they have known a sort of »sabeisme or worship of the stars», particularly characteristic of the women. When the moon rises, he tells us, the women hurry out from the houses, grasp one another by the hand forming into a circle, and begin to dance and shout in honour of the silvery star. They do the same when the morning star appears. They invoke the star and ask him to bless the algaroba harvest and the other forest fruits [1]. A custom like this, I believe, is unknown to the Bolivian Mataco, but I doubt whether even among the Argentine Vejos there exists any real *cult* of the heavenly bodies. All Chaco Indians certainly 821 pay some attention to the moon and to certain stars, or constellations. Mr Grubb relates that the Milky Way is looked upon by the Lenguas as 171 »the path of the *kilyikhama*» (evil spirits), and stones — which are to the Lenguas objects of superstition as to the Choroti — are believed to pass into this constellation. The Pleiades are connected with the beginning of spring, and feasts are held at the time of their rising, [2] etc. Ideas of this kind are, I believe, current among the Pilcomayo tribes also, although I have not made close inquiries on this point. That the sun 821 is a man and the moon is a woman, and that they are married to each other, is a mythical idea which has been noted as held by the Tobas, [3] but with their practical religion it has little or nothing to do. More important 821 is the rôle played by the moon. Not only the months are reckoned from this heavenly body; it is also believed to have a mysterious supernatural power. There is however the usual difference between the effects of the new moon and the waning moon. All Pilcomayo tribes ascribe to the new moon a mysterious influence in promoting both natural processes and human undertakings. Thus, even the menstruation of women is, according to the idea of the Indians, caused, or at any rate influenced, by the new moon. In agriculture great attention is paid to the phases of the moon. The cultivation of the fields is certainly always dependent on rain-fall; but if sowing is done during the new moon, greater success is secured. It is the same with other important undertakings. Algaroba, tusca, and chañar beer, for instance, should be brewed [273] at the time of the new moon. When the sacred drink, the Tobas told me, is exposed to the moonlight and stirred with a stick, this proceeding — in addition to drumming, chanting, and other magic rites — is supposed to promote the fermentation in a wonderful way. Likewise, the Chaco Indians and particularly the Tobas, as I have stated before, [726] generally undertake a war expedition at the time of the waxing moon, not only because of the light that the moon affords at night, but also believing that the moon will have a favourable influence on the enterprise.

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[1] Pelleschi, *Otto mesi nel Gran Ciacco*, p. 118.

[2] Grubb, *op. cit.* p. 139.

[3] Lehmann-Nitsche, *La astronomia de los Tobas*, (*Revista del Museo de La Plata*, Bd. 28, 1925) p. 184.

On the other hand, just as the new moon and the waxing moon is good and propitious, so the waning moon is harmful; it has the effect of making everything decrease and die out. At that time the weather turns cold, men fall ill and die, the tigers appear at night from the forests and kill people, etc. Exactly the same bad effects are caused by eclipses of the moon, or at any rate are believed to follow if the evil spirit which is preying upon the moon is able to complete his work of destruction.¹)

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¹) The Choroti ascribe eclipses of the moon to a *móhsek*, the Mataco to an *aitláh* or *nahút* (Cp. Pelleschi, *Otto mesi nel Gran Ciacco*, p. 118.

CHAPTER XIII.

Belief in „good spirits“.

776 I have so far mainly spoken of such spirits of the Chaco Indians
as are regarded as essentially evilly disposed to mankind, being looked
upon as the authors of sickness and misfortune. But the religion of these
Indians is by no means only a pure demonology. They also assume the
existence of »good spirits» and these from a certain point of view are of
the greatest interest. The Chaco Indians especially speak of their good
spirits with reference to the guardian spirits of the medicine-men and
the spirits animating certain plants. With the former I shall deal presently.
For the moment a few words may be said of the spirits which are
776 believed to animate the *plants*. Of course, there are also evil or harmful
plant spirits. The character of the spirit animating a tree or plant is
824 naturally first of all determined according to the useful or harmful
properties of that tree or plant. Thus plants producing poisonous fruits
harmful to man, are animated by evil spirits, since the effects are always
ascribed to the indwelling spirit, the »soul» of the plant. Likewise, in
[754] the cactus thorns, of which malignant sorcerers avail themselves in
throwing spells, are animated by evil *möhsek*, *aittáh*, *peyák*, according
to the names different tribes give these demons. Still the Chaco Indians
pay special attention to the spirits of such trees or plants as produce
edible or otherwise useful fruit, which in a country like Chaco are of
essential importance to the inhabitants.

776 Among trees which from an alimental point of view are of great importance
824 to the Chaco Indians I have mentioned the algaroba, the chañar,
262 and the tusca, the fruits of which ripen in the months October to February.
It is particularly these trees which are said to be animated by
»good spirits» who control their growth and cause their fruits to ripen.

[p.124]

The Tobas call the spirit *peyák noin* or *nötta*,[1] the Mataco *aittáh slahsa* 776
is, the Choroti *möhsek eis*, and the Ashluslay *sitché is*. The spirit is thus 824
identical with the vital power or the principle of life in the plants, just 262
as the spirit or spiritual power which animates man is the principle
of life and growth in the human body. The same belief is held of cultivated
plants such as the pumpkin, maize, manioc, and the water
melon. Of these the Tobas at any rate appreciate the water melon
most, because from this fruit, just as from the fruits of the wild plants,
they brew an intoxicating drink of mysterious power.

The most important of the forest trees is the algaroba, the value
of which from an alimental point of view has already been mentioned. 824
The algaroba season begins in November and lasts until the end of 789
January, and is therefore impatiently awaited by the natives, and they 776
try to »hurry on» its coming by various magical means. The Mataco
and the Choroti, for instance, are in the habit of beating the drum every
night for about one month previous to the commencement of the »season»,
in order, as they say, to expel the evil demons who prevent the fruit
from reaching maturity, but also with a view to directly influencing the
spirit (*aittáh* or *möhsek*) which is believed to animate the tree. During
the »season» the drum — at any rate among the Choroti — is beaten
even in the day-time. Thus, it is believed, the trees will be influenced
to continue producing fruit in abundance. The Tobas again, perform a
special dance with the same object, beginning some time before the
fruit ripens and continuing this ceremonial dance during the whole
algaroba season.

But the Chaco Indians not only appreciate the algaroba and other 273
fruits as *food*, but above all because of the *intoxicating drinks* they
prepare from them. We should know little of the religion of these Indians
if we did not know the religious ideas associated with these sacred drinks
and the drinking-feasts, which in the summer months form perhaps the
most salient feature of their social life.

The magical power which is commonly ascribed to intoxicating 273
drinks is, according to Indian belief, due to the very spirit which animates 776
the plant and is specially present in its fruit. The plant spirit
reaches its highest point of actuality and concentration when the drink
brewed from its fruit has fermented, for fermentation is to the Indian

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[1] *Nötta* (= *noin'ta*) is a comparative form of the word *nóin*, 'good', but is generally used by the Bolivian Tobas in a positive sense. The Argentine Tobas, on the other hand, more commonly use the word *noin*.

273 776 mind a mysterious and sacred thing. To be intoxicated by the drink is therefore equal to being internally filled with a spirit or spiritual power, and this »good spirit» will, they believe, protect the intoxicated person against supernatural evils of every kind. Thus the Tobas are wont to say of such a person that he has a *peyák nõtla nãppihe*, i.e. a good spirit or *peyák* in the brain (or more strictly speaking, in that special part of the brain which is nearest to the forehead), and other Chaco tribes have exctly the same idea. This is the true reason why the Indians celebrate every important and critical incident, birth and death, the puberty of girls, marriage, warfare, etc., among other things with excessive drinking of some fermented beer. The spirit is present in different liquors in different degrees according to the strength they possess. The best beer, in the opinion of all Indians, is the algaroba beer, because it is the strongest of all. Next to this, the Choroti and Mataco appreciate the beer brewed from the tusca and chañar most, whereas the Tobas prefer the beer made of *santia* or water-melon. From the fruit of the tusca and the chañar the Tobas only rarely brew intoxicating drinks. Similarly maize beer, which plays such an important part in the religious mysteries of the Avas and of many other South American peoples, is not unknown to the Chaco Indians, but is less appreciated than other kinds of beer, since maize is but little cultivated by them.

The idea that a spirit resides in the fermented drink — an idea which is encountered among many South American tribes[1]) — is of course connected with the belief that the very state of ecstasy or exaltation into which a man falls when intoxicated by such a drink is of mysterious or supernatural origin. But there are different kinds of religious ecstasy, and all of them are not inspired by good spirits but some by demons. The spirit of the drink naturally manifests its character in the effects it produces in the person intoxicated by it. The Mataco, who have been most in contact with the whites, say that in their own algaroba beer there is an *aittáh slahsa is* (a good spirit), in the brandy of the whites, on the other hand, an evil and destructive demon. Consequently, when the whites get drunk on their brandy and begin to fight, the Mataco say that they are inspired by demons, and at their great »carnival» — which in Bolivia is usually celebrated amidst orgies and fights — they say, many *aittáh tarakai* (evil spirits) are moving about. It is the same

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[1]) See my *Beiträge zur Sittengeschichte der südamerikanischen Indianer* (*Acta Academiae Aboënsis.* Humaniora. I: 4), the chapter »Berauschende und narkotische Getränke».

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with the Indian himself: when intoxicated by brandy he gets mad and 273
is always ready for fights and outrages; on the other hand, his own 776
native beers comparatively seldom have such bad effects. As a rule they render him happy and joyful, virile and courageous, and make him forget the troubles and hardships of life. This is the reason why, to the Indian mind, there is a *good* deity or spirit residing in the native algaroba beer. But since this deity in the first place inspires the Indian with *virile* qualities, the drinking of this as well as of most other intoxicating drinks is strictly limited to the men. Women never drink algaroba beer, except perhaps some very old women who are freed from the restrictions normally laid upon the weaker sex.

The great drinking-feasts of the Chaco Indians during the »season» 800
will be described later on, as also the ceremonies with which the sacred drinks are prepared.

When the Chaco Indians speak of their »good spirits», however, they T
generally mean spirits of another kind. The medicine-men as a rule 776
speak of these spirits in the singular, meaning thereby a mysterious 756
personal guardian spirit of their own. Such a being is for instance the *peyák nötta* of the *Toba* medicine-man, a kind of individual guardian spirit with whom the Indian has entered into a special relation and whom he asks for assistance in sickness and in every necessity. Among the Tobas all professional medicine-men and many of the older men are said to have such guardian spirits; even some of the women, who then exercise the profession of female sorcerers. The more the person in question has acquired power over his or her »good spirit», the more that person is in possession of what we should call supernatural powers. When, for instance, the medicine-man has to cure a sick person, he summons his own guardian spirit and by his aid expels the disease-demon from the patient's body. Similarly, those sorcerers who practise black or nefarious magic are able to harm their fellows only by the aid of their assistant spirits whom they invoke and who will despatch a spirit against their victim.

If a sorcerer wishes to harm another sorcerer, who of course also C
has his guardian spirit, or some other person in possession of such a spirit, 754
he can do so only by fighting and vanquishing the assistant spirit of 776
that person. This was especially made clear to me by the *Choroti* Indians. A sorcerer who wants to kill or harm such a person, I was told, invokes his own »good spirit»; this comes down from the heavens in the

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shape of a horse [1]) — an animal which is regarded with superstition by the Choroti — and will kill the »good spirit» of the inimical sorcerer. The latter. being thus deprived of his assistant genius, will fall an easy victim to his assailant.

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The guardian spirit is not hereditary but is acquired individually in the course of life and to a certain degree through teaching. The older a person grows, the more power and influence he is believed, by the Tobas, to gain over his *peyák nötta*; hence the medicine-men are generally men of advanced age. The same may be said of the **Choroti**, who regard every old man as being more or less a sorcerer and endowed with supernatural powers. Since the women are always physically and spiritually weaker than men, they have always more difficulty in obtaining guardian spirits. I only know of a special initiation for women, who dedicate themselves to the exercise of the magic art, in the case of the Choroti. A women who wants to become a sorcerer, I was told, must eat a raw chirimoya fruit (*Anona chirimolia?*). When ripe, the chirimoya is edible and good: but in an unripe condition it is said to be poisonous, and a person eating of it according to the belief of the Indians will die or fall ill. If however the woman, while she is eating the raw fruit, performs the ceremony *Kausimä* with the magical rattle staffs, she will escape harm, and she will moreover in the future be able to conjure spirits with success. This idea is in fact typical of the initiation ceremonies of the Indians: the woman has been in contact with evil spirits but has been able to resist them: in consequence she has been rendered immune against them and acquired power over them which enables her to use them for her own ends in the future.

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Apart from the fact that the »good spirit» of the Choroti medicine-men is at least in some cases believed to appear in the form of a horse, the »good spirits» are in their external appearance like other spirits. The *Tobas* say that their *peyák nötta* dwells in the heavens (*piyim*) from where he comes down to assist the medicine-man who invokes him. Similarly the Choroti say that their *möhsek eis*, when summond by the sorcerer comes down from the sky, but the »sky» (*pöle*) is not to the Choroti a definite place like the *piyim* of the Tobas. *Piyim* has developed into a mythological concept: it signifies Paradise or the realm of the dead of the Toba Indians. When a Toba Indian dies, I was told,

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[1]) Since the horse was introduced among the Chaco Indians by Europeans, this is not of course an original idea of the Choroti.

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his soul is taken up to Paradise, *Piyim*, by his *peyák nötta*. Similarly, T the medicine-men are believed to be able to make, with the aid of their 776 guardian spirits, occasional journeys to *Piyim* even in their life-time. 772 The Tobas address prayers to these spirits and even offerings are made to them.

The medicine-men of the *Mataco* also have a »good spirit» (*aittáh is*), M of which much the same holds true as has been said of the »good spirits» 776 of the Tobas and the Choroti. The *aittáh is* of the Mataco is however surnamed 756 *aittáh talák*, *i.e.* »the Old One», and to that extent seems to be more strongly personified than the corresponding tutelary genius of the Tobas and the Choroti. The Old One of the Mataco is not a »Supreme Being» of the kind which is supposed to exist among certain primitive tribes; he is neither a creator of the world nor a guardian of morality. He is the particular guardian spirit of the medicine-men and plays his most important rôle in connection with the conjurations by means of M which the latter try to cure disease. The Mataco ascribe disease to the operation of evil spirits. The cure, as usual, is effected by the expulsion [753] of the evil intruder, but the medicine-man's own art is insufficient for that. He needs supernatural aid, and this aid is afforded him by the *aittáh talák*.

The goodness of the »Old One» however seems to be only relative; capriciousness is one of his properties. In some cases he helps and cures or relieves the patient; but in other cases he gives no relief however much he is invoked. The great question in a case of sickness is consequently: Is the Old One in a good temper and propitious or not? If the patient recovers through the treatment of the medicine-man, the Mataco say: *is aittáh talák*, »The Old One is good». On the other hand, if the patient dies, they say: »This time the Old One was not good».

It is hardly necessary to point out that the belief of the Chaco In- M dians in a »good spirit» is not due to Christian influence but is genuinely 776 Indian. At the time when I visited the tribes of the Rio Pilcomayo they 177 were very little affected by European civilization, both in their religion and in their general culture, and the savage Ashluslay, who also believe in a »good spirit», not at all. Besides, we know that the idea of individual guardian spirits, invoked by the medicine-men and assisting them in their operations, is by no means an exceptional phenomenon among the Chaco Indians, but is met with among many other Indian tribes also, both in South and in North America.

It has long been a current opinion among anthropologists that the 000

000 South American Indians, at any rate the primitive tribes east of the Andes, have no idea of benevolent deities or spirits who interfere in the destiny of men, and that the conjuration of evil spirits is the only form of worship among them. This opinion however is erroneous and due to superficial observation. Magical conjuration is certainly the most salient feature in their cult, but a more propitiatory form of worship also exists, although naturally it escapes the attention of passing travellers. Nor is the idea of »good spirits» difficult to understand. The belief in evil or harmful demons — most of which are nothing but souls of the departed — among the primitive Indian races has evidently originated as a generalization of the experiences of life. The struggle for existence is often hard for primitive man. Disease and death seize them; tempests, hurricanes, and conflagrations devastate their villages and fields; thunderbolts and lightning strikes them; ferocious beasts kill them. In all incidents of this kind the primitive mind, which has no definite ideas of natural causation, is prone to see the operation of invisible supernatural agents. But many times the savage succeeds in overcoming the evils; he is frequently able to cure disease and to escape death and has learnt to control, in different ways, the attacks of nature. In all this he likewise cannot fail to see the intervention of some supernatural power who helps him to get the better of the difficulties. Such general considerations and experiences have no doubt given rise to the belief in a »good spirit» of the kind encountered among the Chaco Indians.

Chapter XIV.

Religious rites and ceremonies.

As I have pointed out, magical conjurations play the most important part in the religious life of the Chaco Indians. These conjurations are of different kinds, according to the different occasions on which they take place, or the particular purposes for which they are performed. In some cases the Indians simply try to frighten the evil spirits away by shouting and making a noise with instruments of some kind; in other cases they try to render them harmless by coërcing and compelling them. But the Indians also have recourse to magical conjurations with rattles, drums, dancing, etc. to influence good and beneficent spirits, for instance those animating certain trees and plants, or with a view to producing certain effects in nature or in the world of human beings merely on the principle of sympathetic magic. On the other hand, there is also a sort of worship, inasmuch as prayers are addressed to the individual guardian spirits in trouble and distress, and these prayers may, at least among the Tobas, be accompanied by offerings. 789

Those practices which may be referred to the category of »conjuration» apparently play the most important part. Being mostly performed by means of magical instruments of some kind, they are at any rate the most conspicuous. Prayers to a great extent escape observation and are kept more secret than other religious ceremonies.

1. Magical ceremonies to cure sickness.

We know already the general theory of disease held by the Chaco Indians. Most bodily evils from which the Indians suffer are, according to their belief, due to witchcraft, which implies that the illness has been sent by a human enemy, generally a malignant sorcerer. In this 753

753 way the Indian has arrived at the theory of »possession»: an evil spirit has entered the body in the form of a material object of some kind. It is the medicine-man's business to extract the evil intruder, and if he succeeds in doing so, the patient will recover. An epidemic, on the other hand, especially such as has come to the Indians from another part of the country, is believed to be directly caused by special disease- and death-demons of a particularly malignant character, who wander about in the village carrying off one victim after the other. Against these demons even the art of the medicine-man is powerless. The only thing the panic-stricken Indians can do in such cases is to abandon the haunted village as soon as possible and wander off to another part of the country.

There is, to these Indians, practically no such thing as »natural» disease and death. Every illness is attributed to supernatural causes, be the diagnosis in a particular case witchcraft or disease.

Therefore, in dealing with native methods of curing illness we are here only concerned with such evils as are set down to witchcraft.

164 There are certain ailments which are particularly characteristic of the Chaco Indians. Rheumatic pains, especially during the dry season, 753 are very common, and both young and old people suffer from them. As we know, they usually come on very suddenly, and even civilized peoples still use expressions like »fairy-dart», »*Hexenschuss*», etc. of such sudden ailments. Beliefs of this kind are held both by the *Choroti* 753 and by the other Chaco Indians. The Indians have very concrete ideas as to the way in which the sorcerers and the demons who serve them operate. The mysterious pain suddenly afflicting a man is explained as due to an arrow shot by an evil spirit. The Choroti accordingly call this disease-demon *mōhsek ihītek*, i.e. »the arrow-shooting demon», and this is an idea which is quite common among the South American Indians in general. The expression seems to indicate that at least in some cases an evil spirit is supposed to operate alone. As a rule, however, he is sent by a human sorcerer. I have already mentioned that the »arrow» or »splinter», discharged by the sorcerer or his assistant demon, is generally a small stone, a cactus thorn, a piece of bone, or a small insect (for instance a worm or a beetle). I have also stated that this seemingly insignificant material object is identical with a mysterious demoniacal being whom the medicine-man, in curing the patient, tries to »extract» from his body. The object is sent by a *mōhsek*, or in a certain sense *is* a *mōhsek*. Generally, however, the Choroti call the mysterious intruder

M 753 by another name: sometimes it is called *nihlêle*, in other cases again *pini*, words which have their equivalents in the Mataco and the Toba languages in the terms *aláh* and *kaipák* respectively. In regard to all these words we have to remember that they belong to the particular mystical terminology of the sorcerers and cannot exactly be translated into any civilized language. The Indian »arrow» or »splinter» is half an inanimate object, half a live being, half material, half spiritual, half natural, half supernatural. Whatever it is, it is to the primitive mind the most real thing possible, because its existence is manifested by its dreadful effects.

C 754 The Choroti Indian, who works evil against his fellow-tribesmen by throwing spells against them, is called a wizard (*ayīeu*). The expression for the nefarious operation itself is in the Choroti language *páhu ahuli sikiätsä*, (»to work evil against a fellow-man by means of witchcraft»). For the purpose of bewitching another Indian the sorcerer tries if possible to get hold of something that has been in close contact with the victim's body, for instance a single hair, a little saliva when he has spat on the ground, something of his excrement, a piece of his clothes, etc., and uses these things as vehicles for his curses. But even a medicine-man or curer, as we have seen, is called *ayīeu*, and there is thus no essential difference between an Indian practising black or nefarious magic and one practising white magic. A man in possession of a guardian spirit may use his art either for the benefit of his fellow-tribesmen or to harm them, according as to whether he regards them as his friends or as his foes.

C [164] 753 Besides rheumatism, affections of the throat and the chest, arising from chill, are very common among the Chaco Indians during the dry season. The Indian explanation invariably is that an evil spirit has entered into that particular part of the body where the pain is felt. If a Choroti Indian suffers from head-ache and I ask him what is the matter with him, he will answer that he has a *mōhsek* in the head; if he suffers from a catarrh, he will point to his throat or his chest and say that a *mōhsek* has taken its seat in either of these parts of the body. In a village I once met an old woman who had her right fore-arm paralyzed, evidently in consequence of a fit of apoplexy. She explained to me that the arm had been seized by an evil *mōhsek*, and had tied a dirty woollen band round the arm at the wrist so as to prevent the evil spirit from penetrating further into the body.

C 761 If the demon is allowed to complete his work of destruction in the

761 body the patient will die, *i.e.* his soul will be compelled to leave its abode. The exertions of the medicine-man again are aimed at expelling the evil intruder.

755 To conjure a disease-demon, that is, to expel it from the body of the patient by incantations and other magical means, is in the Choroti language called *apáhu*. The conjurations nearly always take place in the night or after darkness sets in. This is due to the idea, referred to above, that the night is the special time of the evil spirits. The natives of the Chaco are strengthened in this belief by the fact that catarrhs and other ailments from which they suffer are as a rule worse during the cold nights, whereas in the day-time when the sun is spreading warmth they are less felt. The treatment of the patient takes place outside the hut, generally under a shady algaroba tree, the place where the men assemble for their meetings and drinking-feasts.

The procedure is always about the same. The medicine-man begins his treatment by spitting and blowing vigorously on the particular spot of the body where the evil is seated, and this action is from time to time repeated. This is done to »disinfect» the spot and to prepare it [827] favourably for the extraction of the »arrow». Beneficial purifying effects are commonly ascribed to the saliva, and a medicine-man's saliva is particularly sacred, being imbued with the magic power which fills his whole body. Thereupon the conjuration proper begins. The »doctor» leans over the patient, closes his hand so as to form a tube, puts it on the sick spot and starts to sing, in a low muttering voice, a monotonous chant, ejaculating certain powerful words addressed to the evil demon. The chant mostly consists of refrains; it is evident that the efficacy of the conjuration is mainly ascribed to the voice itself and the breath of the curer, as well as to the very rhythm of the chant. The words or phrases uttered by the Choroti medicine-man are very stereotyped; in fact, they almost invariably seem to consist of the words: *náuhea, náuhea, hiame, hiame . . . náuhea, náuhea, hiame, hiame . . .* incessantly repeated, and only interrupted by the blowing, spitting, and other manipulations. Both words belong to the particular terminology of the medicine-men; *náuhea* means »at night», and *hiame* »go away!» The whole conjuration may thus be translated into: »When night sets in, go away, evil demon!» The phrase has reference to the fact that the evil spirits which cause sickness are believed to move about especially at night, and the doctor is trying, by his conjuration, to prevent the demons from coming back at that critical time to molest the patient. Exactly the same idea appears

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in the conjurations of the Toba medicine-men, as we shall presently find. C 755

These conjurations are varied with other manipulations, above all with blowing, spitting, and rubbing the bad spot. Massage regularly forms part of the treatment applied by the Chaco medicine-men, and is the only action which may really have relieving effects. — Ultimately the doctor again leans over the patient and starts to suck vigorously the bad spot. He turns away, spits and hawks up and behaves as if he were going to vomit. Thereupon he takes something from his mouth and, turning to the bystanders, shows it to them: it is the arrow, consisting of a pebble, a piece of bone, etc. which he pretends to have extracted from the patient's body. The latter should now recover; but it may be that there are several of them in his body, or that a new arrow is sent into it which he will feel on the following night. Generally therefore the treatment must be continued for several evenings.

The Choroti medicine-men also invoke their guardian spirits (*mõhsek eis*), and if they succeed in extracting the arrow, this is said to be ultimately due to the assistance of their good spirits. The invocation of the »good spirit» in connection with the treatment of sickness is however a form of worship that I have studied much better among the Mataco and the Tobas. C 755 776

The *Mataco* have exactly the same theory as to the nature of bodily disorders as the Choroti, ascribing curable »sickness» to possession by an *aittáh sláhsa* (a »little» *aittáh* or demon) and mortal epidemic disease to a *nahút*. The ultimate cause of sickness is witchcraft. To extract the »arrow» or splinter (*aláh*) discharged by the demon or his human controller is the ultimate aim of the medicine-man. But he cannot do it with his own powers, he needs the aid of his »good spirit», the *aittáh talák*. If the good spirit does not come down to his assistance, the patient is bound to die. The invocation of the good spirit, or the prayer, is therefore the last and decisive action of the medicineman's treatment of the sick person. M 753 755 776

Whereas the Choroti medicine-man does not generally use any magical instrument when he treats a patient, the particular instrument of the Mataco doctor is a sort of rattle, called *tahús*, consisting of a number of pieces of tin arranged round a circular piece of leather. When the instrument is shaken it produces a dull sound which is believed to inspire the spirits with fear. At certain other conjurations it is worn by the medicine-man like a cincture round the loins.

755 In the operations of the Mataco medicine-man, more clearly than in the operations of the Choroti curer, we can distingush two different phases: firstly, the conjuration proper, (*tilahán jävús*) when the curer is trying to expel, by his incantations, the evil spirit from the patient's body; and secondly, the invocation of the »good spirit» (*aittáh talák*), who is besought to come down from the heavens and help the curer to extract the splinter. This act has the character of a prayer and is called *ihanéh*.

Generally it is easy to decide whether a conjuration or a prayer is in question. In the conjuration the medicine-man chants in a strong and commanding voice, and shouts and exclamations, likely to inspire the evil spirit with terror, frequently form part of it. In the prayer again the doctor chants in a low and supplicating, sometimes even trembling voice, as if he were trying to awaken the compassion of his guardian spirit. In this act the rattle is never used.

In opposition to what may be said for instance of the Toba medicine-man, the conjuration of the Mataco curer is not melodious but extremely monotonous and little attractive. He chants in a harsh and low voice, coming from the depths of the chest. As usual in the conjurations of the Chaco sorcerers, there are few articulate words to be distinguished; mostly the chant consists of refrains, such as *ai*, *ai*, *hoi*, *hoi*, *hai*, *hayi*, etc., which are incessantly repeated.

As to the conjuration proper, different medicine-men chant in somewhat different ways, but the procedure is essentially the same. There are the same operations in the form of spitting, blowing, rubbing the bad spot, sucking etc., varying with verbal conjurations and shaking of the rattle. The following is an instance of a conjuration which I witnessed:

Ai, *ai*, *ai*, *ai*, *ai*, *ai*,
Ai, *ai*, *ai*, *ai*, *ai*, *ai*,
hai, *hayi*, *hai*, *hayi*, *hai*, *hayi*,
hayá, *hayá*, *hayá*,
hai, *hayi*, and so forth.

The doctor interrupts himself from time to time, and starts to blow and spit and to shake the rattle close to the part of the body which is the seat of the evil.

In another case he pronounces with much vigour, the following conjuration:

755

Hämák, hämóh, hämák hämóh,
hämák, hamóya, hämák, hamóya,
hämák, hämóh, etc.

Hämák means 'malicious', evil, and *hämóh* 'go away'. The meaning of the whole conjuration thus is: »go away, evil demon!» The phrase, being incessantly repeated in conjunction with the shaking of the rattle and other operations, is supposed to have the effect of forcing the demon to leave the body.

The Mataco medicine-men however generally try to make their conjurations of the demons of sickness more effective through *dancing*. 755 535 Sometimes the doctor himself interrupts his incantations and other operations and starts to dance round the patient, sometimes other Indian men or women perform a savage dance round the patient while the curer leans over him. The dance which has for its object to conjure a disease-demon is called *Nahútsak* by the Mataco. The very name (drived from *nahút*, evil spirit) indicates the purely ceremonial character of this dance. There are however different forms of the *Nahútsak*. In some cases it is a sort of ring-dance; in other cases the Mataco by this name denote a dance of the same type as the *Nahót dónnaran* of the Tobas, which will presently be described.

To give the reader an idea of the Mataco dance *Nahútsak* in a case of sickness I may first borrow the following vivid description of a conjuration which the Italian explorer Pelleschi once witnessed in a Mataco village in the Argentine Gran Chaco. »In the midst of the tolderia», he tells us, »in a sort of open square, I saw a circle of black figures lighted up here and there by the flames of the great fire: these were women and men sitting on their heels silently smoking. Within the circle four robust men were running backwards and forwards within a space of about eight yards. Ostrich feathers and little bells were fastened to their ankles, wrists, heads and waists . . In their hands, which were always lifted up in gesticulation, they held small gourds, half-filled with grain, and these, being shaken, added to the din. They rushed about shouting and yelling, panting and sweating; thrusting out their legs, they stamped hard upon the ground, and then raised their voices in desperation, lifting up their arms, with head bowed and body curved. By turns two of them would stop short, and squatting on the ground would shake their heads rapidly from left to right, backwards and forwards, groaning, blowing, and spitting on the back, legs, head and face of two sick persons who had been

755 placed in their midst . . . . The spectators remained to do honour to the
535 treatment and increase its efficacy, but not without fear that the *ahút*, on quitting the body of the sick man might enter into theirs».[1])

This savage dance was typical of the Indian dances as far as they have the character of magical conjurations. The Indians firmly believe that they can terrify and expel the evil demon who has taken possession of the patient by violent movements and menacing gestures such as those just described. As to the ostrich feathers which the sorcerers had fastened to ankles, wrists, head and waist, some words of explanation may be added. [189] The feather ornaments which the Indians wear in most of their dances and conjurations are not real ornaments but magical charms which eke out the powers emanating from the whole personality of the sorcerer. Like body-paintings, necklaces made of animals' teeth, rattle bells and gourds etc. they effectively help in conjuring the evil spirits.

The following is a conjuration accompanied by dancing which I myself witnessed in a Mataco village in the Bolivian Gran Chaco. Two Indian sorcerers were trying to cure a horse which was evidently badly attacked by an *aittáh* or *nahút*. The cure took place on various successive nights in an open place outside the *tolderia*. One of the sorcerers chanted in the usual way with his closed hand laid on the neck of the sick horse; the other both chanted and danced. Stamping with the feet alternately on the ground to the measure of his chant, he moved some ten steps away from the horse and then back again, repeating these movements several times. In his hand he held the rattle which he shook incessantly as an accompaniment to his dance and chanting. During the dance the man now and then took up a pebble or a small stick from the ground and threw it into the forest, spitting at the same time vigorously in the same direction. On the path where he moved he had laid some live embers. After a while the sorcerer interrupted his dance, stood close to the horse by the side of his colleague, and shaking the rattle heartily over the animal he shouted several times in a loud voice: *yame! yame! yame!*, that is to say, »go out, go out, go out!» These were the only words uttered during the whole conjuration. During his chanting the
755 sorcerers only pronounced refrains such *hŏ, hŏ, hŏ, a, a, a*, and so forth.
533 The tune which the dancer again and again repeated and accompanied with his rattle was the following:

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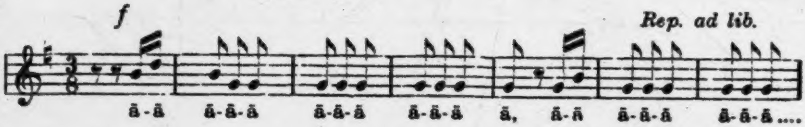
[1]) Pelleschi, *Otto mesi nel Gran Ciacco*, p. 140.



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It is evident that the intention of the sorcerer was to drive away the evil demon into the forest in the direction in which he moved during the dance. With the same intention he threw the pebbles and spat in that direction. Again, the object of the embers placed on the path, as the Indians explained to me, was to burn the demon after it had been forced to leave the horse. — 755

The invocation of the »good spirit», an act called *ihanéh* by the Mataco, generally immediately follows the conjuration proper, but may also take place without a preceeding conjuration. It is an important act, since on the intervention of the good spirit the success of the whole treatment depends, but externally it does not differ much from a conjuration. At the »prayer», however, the rattle is never used. In all cases which came under my notice the chant or invocation of the good spirit was a chant without words. Evidently the medicine-man thinks that the tone of his voice alone is enough to move the compassion of the guardian spirit. 755 782

Thus, in one invocation of the good spirit which I witnessed the doctor again and again repeated the following refrains:

Am, gaum, gaum, am, gaum, gaum, am, gaum, gaum,
uh! am gaum, gaum, uh! aum, gaum, gaum, etc.

in another again he incessantly repeated:

ó-ho, ó-ho, ó-ho, ó-ho,
ó-ho, ó-ho, ó-ho, ó-ho, etc., etc.

Lastly follows the usual extraction of the »arrow» or splinter, if the medicine-man has been successful in his invocation of the good spirit and the latter has come down to his assistance. Generally the doctor draws out the evil by sucking. He spits out the splinter on the ground, thereupon shows it to the bystanders, and declares that it is the thing that has caused the evil. The procedure is thus exactly the same as among the Choroti. 755

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756 I have studied the different phases of the treatment of sick people more thoroughly among the *Tobas*. A medicine-man or sorcerer is in [776] the Toba language called *yeyátten*. He is a person who has acquired a certain power and influence over the spirits by virtue of the intimate relation in which he stands to one particular guardian spirit whom he calls his »good spirit» (*peyák nõtta*). The word *yeyátten* means »one who knows» (about the spirits). The word itself indicates that to the Tobas medicine is a real art which, at least to a certain degree, can be acquired by learning. I do not know of special initiations for the medicine-men, nor, as far as I know, do any particular mental qualifications seem to be necessary for entering this profession. From what I have stated above — and this was particularly made clear to me by the Tobas — a medicine-man ought however always to be spiritually »strong» and possess a natural power of resistance against the evil spirits with whom he has to deal. According to the Indian view, the human body itself possesses a natural »power» owing to the spirit which animates or, rather, the vital and psychical energy with which it is filled and which is particularly concentrated in such parts as the hair and the nails, the blood, the saliva, etc. We have moreover seen that the magical power of the body is generally stronger in men than in women, and also stronger in old men than in youths. Although for this reason women as a rule play only a secondary part in religious ceremonies, there are, nevertheless, among the Tobas — as among the Mataco — female sorcerers also, but they have not great importance. I may add that they carry out their exorcism in much the same way as their male colleagues; but women can only cure female patients, whereas male sorcerers are able to cure men and women alike.

753 752 Like the Choroti and the Mataco, the Tobas account for all bodily disorders by their theory of intruding spirits, *peyák*. The same theory of illness is adhered to even in purely surgical cases. If for instance a Tobas Indian cuts himself with a knife, he is likely to attribute the accident to the evil designs of a *peyák*; and if the wound does not heal, but gets infected and bad, it is immediately clear to him that a demon has entered into it or, as the phrase runs in such cases: *nóchingi nãtolík*, a »boy» has passed into the patient. Evil spirits attack even animals, and just as among the Mataco, it is no rare thing among the Tobas to see a man trying to cure his sick horse by conjurations.

755 The »arrow» or »splinter» is in the Toba language called *kaipák*, and the technical term for »extracting the arrow» is *nakát kaipák*. As is usual

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among the Chaco tribes, the Toba medicine-man begins his treatment with the conjuration proper (*empacherón*, 'conjuration', *empaché, pionák*, 'to conjure', 'to chant'). The instrument which he uses there is the *heligday*, a number of small bells attached to a circular piece of leather, which he shakes during his chant and to which some mysterious magical power is ascribed. Holding this instrument in his hand, and usually painted red or black in the face, the medicine-man comes to the patient, leans over him, puts his closed hand upon the spot on his body where the evil is felt, and starts his incantation. As is the rule in Chaco, the Toba medicine-man in his conjurations never utters many words, since the voice by itself is supposed to have a magical efficacy. Sometimes his incantation merely consists of ejaculations, but generally he pronounces a few words belonging to an archaic language or to the special terminology of the medicine-man, which are not understood by the common people without a special explanation. 755 [302] [198]

A common conjuration in sickness is the following. The medicine-man leans over the patient and chants in a low voice: 755 533

Balaimi, balaimi, balaimi, balaimi,
balaimi, balaimi, balaimi, balaimi. etc.
laililá, laililá, laili,
laililá — — — *laili*, etc.

This chant is incessantly repeated, the words being pronounced slowly and expressively. During the chant the sorcerer now and then shakes his rattle close to the part of the body which is the seat of the evil. Sometimes he interrupts himself for a moment and begins to spit and blow on the same spot.

The words *balaimi, laililá, laili* form part of the special medical terminology and mean the same as *nályi* = »in the night». To understand why the sorcerer again and again repeats this expression it is necessary to call to mind what has been stated before about the operation of the demons, namely that, according to the idea of the Tobas, they attack men only at night (*nályi*) and that in the day they do not exist, having then retired far from human habitations. It is the same with the disease demons. Since most diseases are really better in the day and worse at night, the Tobas believe that in the day-time the *peyák* do not as a rule attack the patients; but with the approach of night they return and re-enter the body. It is incumbent on the medicine-man to 755 753

755 753 prevent this, and most incantations and prayers as a matter of fact take place after darkness sets in. *Balaimi* is an elliptic expression and means about the same as: *nályi hămóh peyák*, »Go away in the night, demon!», or »Demon, do not come at night!». This chant, incessantly repeated to the accompaniment of the rattle, is supposed to keep off the invisible tormentor or to paralyse his actions.

755 533 Another time the medicine-man is heard to repeat over and over again the following phrase:

Hemá — rá(l) — kohót, Hemá — rá(l) — kohót,
◡ — — ◡ — ◡ — — ◡ —

Hemá — ra — á — (s)ayim, Hemá — ra — á — (s)ayim.
◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ — ◡ —

This means:

»I send (the demon) away into the woods,
I send him into the woods;
I send him away, I send him away.»

In this chant also the words are pronounced slowly and with emphatic accentuation of certain syllables, as indicated above. The measure is marked by means of the *heligday*, which the medicine-man shakes the whole time.

755 Next, there follows the ceremony called *Tok tolýgin*. It is the expression used for that particular moment in the treatment of the patient when the medicine-man spits and blows upon the affected part of his body. This operation is undertaken in the beginning of the treatment and is repeated from time to time in the course of the operation. Its object is, as it were, to »disinfect» the sick spot and prepare it favourably for the extraction of the splinter.

755 782 Now follows the invocation of the *peyák nõtta* or »good spirit» (*hayeyátten*).

The invocation of the »good spirit» may be a continuation of the conjuration proper, but also occurs as an independent ceremony. The medicine-man does not, in his operation, trust entirely to his own skill, but utimately expects help from that supernatural being over whom he has acquired a special influence. It is with the aid of his guardian spirit that he succeeds

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in »drawing out the splinter». The good spirit is invoked by means of a chant which differs somewhat in tone from the real conjuration; nor is the rattle used at this ceremony. Certain words are sometimes pronounced in this chant; sometimes, again, the tone alone indicates that a prayer is being uttered. 755 782

The following is an invocation to the good spirit. The medicine-man leans over the patient and chants in a low voice:

Ho! *Ligará, ligará, ligará, ligarái.*
Ho! *Muahá, ligará, ligara, ligarái.*

Or, with a somewhat different rhythm:

Hei, hei, hĩ, hõ, o-hõ, lígara
Hei, hei, hĩ, hõ o-hõ, lígara,
Ligara! Ligara! Ligara!, Ligara!
Hei, hei, hĩ, hõ, o-hõ, lígara, etc.

On another occasion we hear the following incantation. The medicine-man chants slowly and expressively:

Eiye, aeiye, eiye, aeiye,
Unghá, unghá, unghá, unghá.
Eiye, aeiye, eiye, aeiye,
Unghá, unghá, unghá, unghá.

Ligara is a formula of invocation and means the same as: *Adhóma peyák nõtta nakát kaipák*, »Come, good spirit, to draw out the splinter!» The same is the meaning of the expression *eiye, aeiye* which, however, are probably not real words but merely refrains. *Unghá*, on the other hand is the same as *nówyi* = »he is coming». The medicine-man thus at first repeatedly invokes the spirit to descend from the heavens to assist him and thereafter immediately adds, as if to inspire himself with confidence, that he is coming. When translated into ordinary language the implication of the prayer is therefore:

»Come, good spirit, from the heavens to draw out the splinter!
Yes, he is coming, he is coming!»

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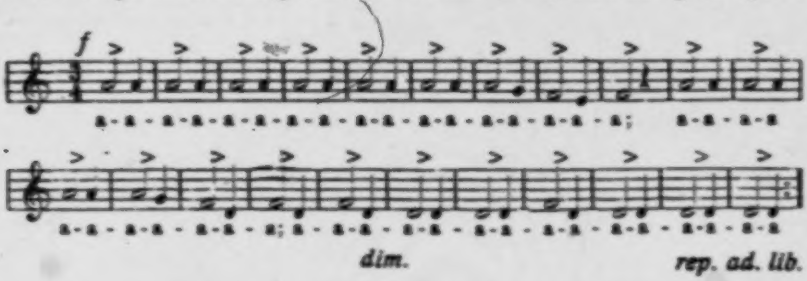
There is also a prayer to the good spirit which consists merely of a melodious chant, no words being pronounced. One of the medicine-men always used to sing this chant when he invoked the good spirit:


f
a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a; a-a - a-a
a-a - a-a - a-a - a; a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a - a-a
dim.
rep. ad. lib.

I am not quite sure whether this melody is genuinely Indian or borrowed. All Indians are very fond of music and of singing, but their own production within this sphere is very poor and they readily borrow from the whites what melodies they can, since they can use them in their conjurations.

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An interesting action is the »propitiation» (?) of the demon (*Jamaranyin peyák*).

After the conjuration of the disease demon and the invocation of the good spirit there follows a peculiar ceremony. The demon, humiliated by the previous treatment, is slowly drawn out by the medicine-man from the body of the sick person in the form of a small splinter which he shows to the surrounding people. This moment is called: *peyák yuvóttak*, or *peyák uaiyi*, i.e. »the demon leaves». But it may be that he only leaves for a while or for that night, and that he will return the next night to continue his destructive work. To prevent this, further measures must be taken and they take the form of an apparently peaceful negotiation with him. Turning away from the patient and pretending to hold the spirit in his hand, the medicine-man converses with him in a low, muttering voice, directing, as it seems, various questions to him. Among other things he offers him tobacco, asking whether he likes to smoke. (*Koik? Koiaran koiannache?* »Do you want tobacco? Do you like to smoke a pipe?»). The medicine-man himself as well as the surrounding men answer these questions — on behalf of the spirit — by a nod of the head and a low mumbling. This conversation having gone on for a while, the medicine-man stops, and redeeming his promise as to the tobacco he lights his pipe and blows thick clouds of smoke upon the

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755 782 patient and all around. Thereafter he may finish his operation or start anew with a conjuration and prayer. The proceeding is repeated every night — in severe cases, though seldom, even during the day — until the patient recovers and the demon shows that he has no longer a desire to return at night to torment him.

The most interesting point in this ceremony is the offering of tobacco to the spirit. The Indians expressly declared that it is supposed to make the spirit »good», or to propitiate him. From this it seems that the tobacco is actually regarded as a gift to the demon, but this character of the offering is in fact rather pretended than real. Tobacco, like coca, Indian pepper, and many other similar plants, owing to their striking effects upon the human body and mind, hold an important place in the religion and superstition of the American Indians, and it is more than probable that tobacco was used among these natives as a magical means of expelling evil spirits before it became an object of enjoyment. The tobacco offering of the Tobas to the disease-demon has thus exactly the same magical character as the frequent coca offerings of the Quichuas and Aymara in the west, who for instance are in the habit of throwing bunches of coca leaves into deep gorges and other dangerous places in order to keep off the evil spirits inhabiting them. [781] It is characteristic of the Indian way of dealing with such spirits that they give the ceremony the appearance of a real offering or gift to the demon, although it is in fact calculated to stupefy them and to keep them away.

755 In regard to the treatment of sick people it must be added thal although all medicine-men operate in much the same way, they may differ from each other in certain details. Thus one medicine-man may lay more stress upon the conjuration proper (*empacherón*), whereas another mostly has recourse to prayers (*hayeyátten*). But however a medicine-man may operate, the assistance of the »good spirit» is always considered necessary for a successful issue of the operation. Only with the aid of his *peyák nötta* is the sorcerer able to »remove the splinter».

755 535 Like their neighbours the Mataco Indians, the Tobas frequently try to eke out the efficacy of their conjurations by *dancing*. Dancing is especially resorted to in serious cases of illness, when other means have proved futile, or when an epidemic is raging. The kind of dance by which the Tobas conjure demons of disease is called *Nahót dónnaran* and seems to be but a variation of the ceremonial ring-dance called *Nahotti*. *Dónnaran* in the Toba language means 'to chant', 'to sing'; *nahót* (*nahút*)

755 535 again, is the Mataco word for 'demon' or 'evil spirit' and has evidently been borrowed by the Tobas from their neighbours on the other side of the river. *Nahót dónnaran* thus simply means «to conjure a demon by singing». The name exactly corresponds to the true nature of the dance. — When in a certain case of illness the ordinary treatment of the medicine-man has failed to effect the desired result, the Tobas sometimes proceed to special measures. From all houses in the village men and women assemble in the evening outside the house of the patient, each of the men bringing his *heligday*, a sort of rattle composed of small bells attached to a circular piece of leather. The sick person is carried out from the house and laid upon the open place outside it. When night approaches the people begin to dance around him, marking time with their rattles. Jumping up and down with both feet at once and with knees bent they move forwards and backwards, to the right and to the left, yet always keeping round the sick person. They accompany their dance not only with the shaking of the rattle bells but also with chanting, or rather loud shouting; indeed, the main thing in the dance seems to be to make as much noise as possible. While the others dance, the medicine-man performs his particular office. Leaning over the patient he mutters a chant of his own, uttering certain powerful words and shaking his rattle repeatedly over the part of the body which is the seat of the evil. The whole ceremony is continued, with short intervals, until midnight.

751 535 The *Nahót dónnaran* is not only danced in actual cases of illness, but also with a view to *preventing* illness. The Tobas perform this dance especially in the month of October, at the end of the dry season and the beginning of the wet season, the object being to keep off an epidemic disease which is said particularly to attack the women. The dance is held on several successive nights, and elderly women especially, but also young girls, take part in it. A peculiarity of this dance, as of many other Indian conjurations, is that the performance is, as it were, a gradual one: the dancing, chanting, and rattling is at first slow and discreet, increasing gradually in strength until it reaches a climax, after which it again decreases. One of the sorcerers is heard gently shaking his rattle; soon he accompanies the «music» with a chant, uttered in a low voice; the chant and rattling grows louder and louder and the pace faster; finally he also begins to dance. Two, three, and more men join him in the dance, lastly even the women take an active part in the ceremony, at first only dancing, but soon chanting as well. The pace grows

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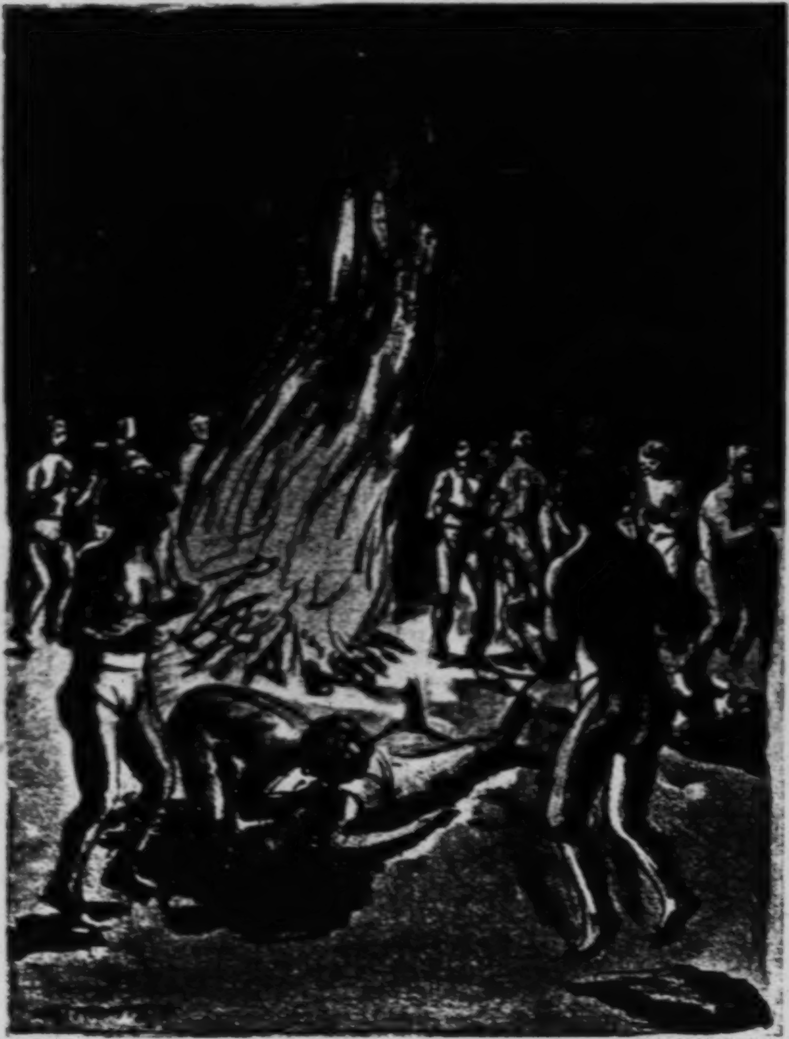
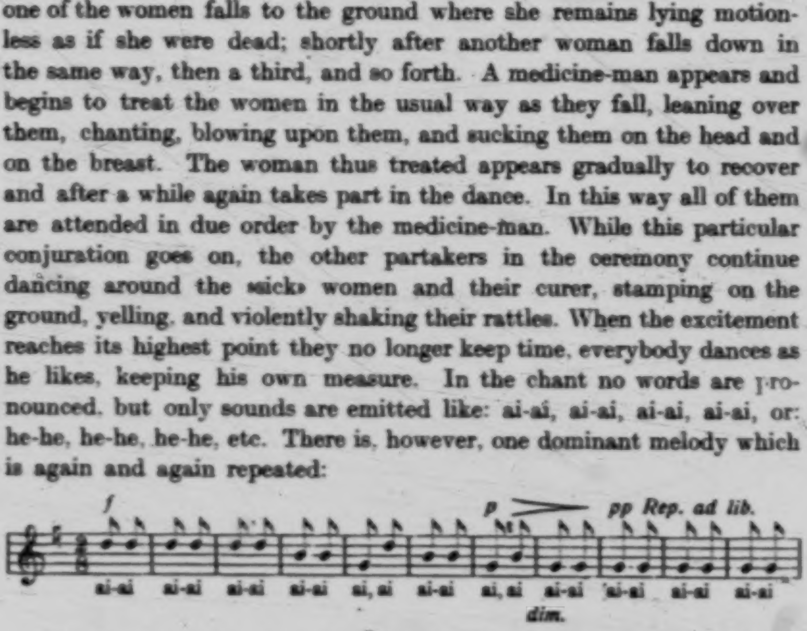


Painting by E. Wanström.

Nahót dónnaran, the night dance of the Tobas, performed to cure or prevent epidemic disease.

751 faster and faster and the whole dance more and more noisy. Suddenly one of the women falls to the ground where she remains lying motion-
535 less as if she were dead; shortly after another woman falls down in the same way, then a third, and so forth. A medicine-man appears and begins to treat the women in the usual way as they fall, leaning over them, chanting, blowing upon them, and sucking them on the head and on the breast. The woman thus treated appears gradually to recover and after a while again takes part in the dance. In this way all of them are attended in due order by the medicine-man. While this particular conjuration goes on, the other partakers in the ceremony continue dancing around the »sick» women and their curer, stamping on the ground, yelling, and violently shaking their rattles. When the excitement reaches its highest point they no longer keep time, everybody dances as
751 he likes, keeping his own measure. In the chant no words are pronounced, but only sounds are emitted like: ai-ai, ai-ai, ai-ai, ai-ai, or:
535 he-he, he-he, he-he, etc. There is, however, one dominant melody which
533 is again and again repeated:



The first notes in this melody are always sung in a loud voice; then the voice gradually diminishes and the last notes, which are repeated *ad libitum*, are only heard as a low, distant murmur. Thereafter the chant is again repeated from the beginning, and so on.

While the main body of the dancers go on repeating this chant, one of the sorcerers, who seems to be the leader of the ceremony and moves about more than the rest, occasionally sings a somewhat different melody, his voice being heard louder than those of the rest.

751 The dance, which is generally in a very quick tempo, is of course extremely trying in the heat of the tropical night. It is probably for
535 this reason that the dancers appear almost naked, the men wearing only the usual small waist-belt, and the women a short petticoat round the loins. Still the sweat can be seen flowing down the naked bodies in streams. This sweating, however, seems to be desired and to form a part of the »cure»: it aids in the purification from the evil spirits. The dance, which is performed by moon-light or in the light of a big fire of pampas grass, sometimes goes on without interruption for nearly an

hour. Then a pause is made, after which the noisy ceremony is again 751
continued. Like most Indian conjurations, this dance goes on from the 535
close of the day till about midnight. It is one of the most savage dances I have witnessed among the South American Indians and can only be compared with the night »victory-dance« of the Jibaros, performed round the head of the slain enemy.

It must be added that most of the persons who take part in this ma- 751
gical ceremony have their faces painted in one way or another, generally 535
with the red dye obtained from the *urucú*-plant (*Bixa orellana*). Some 302
girls may be seen with real ornamental patterns on their cheeks, representing, for instance, heads of arrows, teeth of animals, etc. These facial paintings, like all Indian body-paintings, have a purely magical significance: they serve to keep off the demons with which the dancers come into contact during the ceremony, and help to conjure them.

As to the significance of this dance, it is especially interesting because 751
it is *prophylactic* in character. The women are not really ill; they only pretend to be ill and are treated accordingly. The Indians gave me the following explanation; at the end of the dry season their country is usually visited by an epidemic disease, which is attended with pains in the head and in the chest, and which especially attacks the women. This illness, according to the belief of the Indians, is caused by a great number of *peyák* (evil spirits) who visit the village at night, and the dance is intended to conjure them and keep them off. Evidently it is thought that when the women are treated *in advance* for the illness, this is an efficacious means of preventing them from really falling ill.

Among the Tobas it sometimes occurs that the patient *himself* dances 755
to cure himself, naturally only in cases of comparatively slight illness. 535
Once I witnessed such a dance, performed by two women who seemed to suffer from rheumatic pains in the breast and the shoulders. The women jumped up and down with the feet in the usual way, but without chanting and without using rattles. The dance was led by a sorcerer who chanted and danced at first slowly and then faster, accompanying himself with his *heligday*. The small dancing party was encircled by other Indian men and women who, sitting on the ground, accompanied the dancers with chanting and shaking of rattles. The concert gradually grew louder and louder, and ultimately developed into a dreadful noise. Having danced a while, the patients laid themselves down on the ground and a medicine-man began to cure them, performing his usual conjurations, while the other men and women continued their chanting.

155 Whilst the dance went on another peculiar ceremony took place:
183 a fire-brand was swung round in all directions on the place of the dance.
A man then took the brand and carried it far into the forest chanting
loudly, walked in a big circle and lastly appeared again on the scene
of the dance, chanting incessantly.

The principal idea connected with the dancing of sick persons, as the
Indians explained to me, is that the evil spirit is forced to leave the body
[827] with the perspiration. It is therefore essential that the patient should
go on dancing till he perspires abundantly. For the rest the principles
of the dance are the same as in other similar conjurations. Again, the
ceremony with the fire-brand was a purification ceremony, quite common
among the Chaco tribes. Among the Tobas it is called *Koyadānatti*. The
evil spirit which was being conjured had thereafter to be driven off
[372] into the forest. Fire is generally considered by the Indians to be an
extremely efficacious means of expelling evil spirits, and the above mentioned
practice is especially resorted to when a death has taken place
in the village.

151 Another prophylactic magical dance of the Tobas is the one known
under the name *Nahõre*, »the Tiger-dance» (*nahõre*, 'tiger'). It is performed
535 about the same time as the *Nahót dónnaran*. The persons taking part in this dance are young men and women, and the first impression is that it is only a game or pastime. They are arranged in a circle, boys and girls alternately. In the middle of the circle sit some elderly women. Each of the boys has a big cloth in his hand. Like other Indian conjurations the dance begins slowly, the tempo gradually growing faster. At first the dancers only walk one behind the other in a circle, each boy now and then lashing the girl in front of him on the loins with his cloth. Soon they begin to leap, faster and faster, and the lashes on the loins of the girls likewise follow quicker and quicker. Suddenly one of them falls to the ground where she remains lying motionless as if she were dead: then a second falls, thereafter a third, and so forth in the same way as in the *Nahót dónnaran*. A medicine-man, who represents the tiger, appears and begins to treat the girls in turn as they fall. He puts his mouth to the girl's breast, sucks it on two spots and blows on it, after which he spits out what he pretends to extract. Then he treats the head in the same way, sucking it and blowing on it. The girl thus »cured» appears to recover, rests for a while, and again takes dart in the dance. This procedure is repeated with all the girls succes-

sively. The dance is continued with short pauses for several hours. 751
Like most Indian dances it always takes place in the evening. 535

The *Nahōre* bears a certain resemblance to the *Nahót dónnaran*.
It differs however from the latter dance in certain points.[1] In the
Nahōre no rattles are used, nor do the partakers in this ceremony chant
or sing. They simply go on jumping, the boys lashing the girls, only
now and then encouraging one another with exclamations and accom-panying each lash of the cloth with an emphatic *sch!* Similarly the
medicine-man who acts as tiger (*nahōre*), departs from his usual method
of curing sick people in so far as he neither chants nor uses his rattle,
contenting himself with sucking the patient on the supposed seat of the
evil. While he wanders among the women curing them he now and then
gives a sound resembling the grunting of the tiger when it roams about
in the night searching for prey: *yānā, yānā, yānā*.

This pantomimic dance has much the same serious magical signi-ficance as the *Nahót dónnaran:* its object is to protect the women against
the tiger or to save them from falling victims to it. This is effected by
representing an encounter between them in a euphemistic way. The
woman who has met the animal in the woods tries to escape from it by
flight, but soon falls exhausted to the ground and seems hopelessly lost.
But in the dance the tiger is a benevolent being. He does not harm the
woman; on the contrary he cures her. The idea, in fact, seems to be that
by the tiger itself remedying the evils which it inflicts, this will in real
life be a safe-guard against the feared beast. To understand the ceremony 751
fully we must know the superstitions the Indians have about the tiger. 535
The Tobas, like most South American Indians who are acquainted with
the jaguar, regard it as an incarnation of an evil spirit. It is commonly 825
believed that certain persons are changed into jaguars after death, and
this belief is confirmed when — as sometimes happens — the beast
visits a village at night and kills some of its inhabitants. The way in
which the girls are treated by the medicine-man in the *Nahōre* dance
— by sucking, etc. — shows that the evil afflicting them is supposed to
have been caused by a demon which has taken possession of them.

The cloth with which the boys lash the girls on the loins in this dance 751
plays much the same part as the rattle in other dances. The object of 535
the lashing is to purify the girls from the evil demon and to chase it
away. Striking or lashing with a whip or a cloth is in South America 783
largely practised as a means of purifying from evil spirits, and takes
place especially at death feasts. The object of such lashing ceremonies

751 is no doubt to purify the mourners from the death-demons which are
535 especially supposed to mix with the blood. The lashing with the cloth
783 in the *Nahõre* dance of the Tobas has a similar aim.

In this connection I may mention a ceremonial dance of much the
755 same kind, which was described to me by a Bolivian settler who had lived for some time in the land of the Tobas. An Indian man had been taken ill or had fallen a victim to some accident whilst wandering in the forest. He was carried home by his comrades, whereupon the following curative ceremony took place. The sick Indian lay on the ground groaning with pain. The other Indians started to dance round him, leaping on all fours, imitating in their movements and in the sounds which they produced certain big animals of the forest: one imitated the tiger, another the lion (puma), a third the fox, a fourth some other animal, and so on. Now and then the dancers stopped, leant over the sick man and began to suck at him and blow on the seat of the pain. — The close resemblance of this dance to the *Nahõre* just described is conspicuous.
[825] Evidently it was believed that a beast of the wood, or rather the evil demon incarnated in it, had caused the evil, and not knowing with certainty which particular animal it was, the Indians considered it necessary to represent several of them in the pantomimic dance. The principle in such ceremonies is, that when the animal itself cures the evil it has inflicted, recovery will follow with more certainty.

000 The idea of the Tobas, that certain animals, or animal spirits, may cause disease by entering into the body, is also found among other tribes in South America and seems to be especially common among the North American Indians.

A few more remarks may be made on the medicine-men and their
755 treatment of the sick. We have heard about the »arrow» or »splinter» as the immediate cause of the sickness, and the extraction of it; but whence the object in question — the bone, the pebble, the thorn, the worm, the live insect, or whatever else it may be — originally comes, is difficult to decide. The Indian medicine-men have often, and especially by missionaries, been called conscious impostors who avail themselves of the credulity of their fellow-tribesmen to gain personal profit. In this way for instance Mr. Barbrooke Grubb[1] characterizes the Lengua wizards. The greater part of their art, according to him, is pure deception, although he admits that to a considerable extent they are the victims of self-deception. There may perhaps be some difference between the Lengua wizards and the wizards of the Pilcomayo tribes, but to me it

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
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seems certain that for instance the medicine-men of the Mataco and the 755
Tobas are by no means conscious impostors but exercise their art in good faith. They firmly share the belief as to the nature of sickness and its cure which is held by the whole people, and they are at bottom no more »impostors» than a medical man in a civilized society. As to the »arrow», I have already pointed out that although the medicine-man assigns the object in question as the direct cause of the sickness, he in fact means the *evil spirit* of which it is the embodiment. In order to expel the disease-demon he wants an object similar to the supposed »arrow», and this is the reason why he frequently has the very object ready beforehand which he pretends to »extract» from the patient's body.

It the efforts of the medicine-man are frustrated and the patient 756
dies, the former does not, among the Chaco tribes, run any risk of being punished or, as far as I know, even blamed by the relatives. The failure of his operations is only regarded as a sign that this time the »good spirit» did not allow the sick person to recover but had decided that he should die. The medicine-man himself generally declares this to the relatives, who consequently give up hope of recovery. The wonderful [761]
resignation, with which in such cases both the latter and the patient himself submit to the inevitable, makes manifest that fatalism which lies at the bottom of the Indian's nature.

Of the Tobas Cardús relates that if the medicine-man declares that 763
a patient whom he is trying to cure cannot recover, the Indians immediately kill him by striking him at the head with a club. According to 88?
the same missionary, if a Toba man had attained a very great age 766
and his kinsmen suspected that his last hour was approaching, they did not wait for the burial until the end had arrived, but the women, amidst a great turmoil, seized him by the legs and the arms, dragged him outside the village and took him to a retired place where they had dug a narrow and shallow grave. There they interred him, still alive, in a seated position, pressing his head against the breast in order that he might die sooner in this posture. Thereafter they threw a little earth upon him, not waiting until he had drawn his last breath, and covered the tomb with a few branches of trees to prevent the wild beasts from exhuming and devouring the corpse.[1] 763

There is no reason to doubt the truth of this statement, which evident- 766

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[1] Cardús, *op. cit.* p. 265. See also Azara, *Descripción e historia del Paraguay y del rio de La Plata.* Asunción, 1896. tome I. 287.

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ly refers to a custom already abandoned by the Tobas. It reminds us of a similar custom of the Choroti who, as I have stated have been in the habit of killing old, decrepit men with an arrow-shot in the heart to prevent them from reappearing as evil death-bringing spirits. The fact that, as Mr. Grubb relates, the Lenguas have been in the habit of burying hopelessly sick patients alive shows that such cruel customs have been wide-spread among the Chaco tribes. Its motives, as I have pointed out before, [1]) are to be sought in superstitious fear. Among all Indians the spirits of old men — especially those of medicine-men and sorcerers — are particularly feared. If such a person is allowed to die a natural death, this means that the evil spirit who caused the sickness has wholly taken possession of his soul, identified himself with it, and changed the departed Indian into an evil, destructive demon. This, according to the idea of the Indians, can be prevented by giving such a patient a violent death before he is killed by the disease-demon. [2])

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Lastly, I may remark that there is not in the manipulations of the medicine-man much that has the character of what we may call a »natural» cure, the only operations likely to give real relief being the massage of the sick spot and the suction, which in fact is sometimes so strong that it almost amounts to cupping. Various drugs and herbs are indeed used by the Chaco Indians for curative purposes and are not seldom alleged to have really healing effects [3]). These, however, are not exclusively used by the medicine-men; most elderly men seem to know about them. In the treatment of the professional medicine-men these remedies, curiously enough, seem to play but a subordinate part, magical conjurations being regarded as more important. — When a patient recovers in consequence of a medicine-man's »cure», as is not seldom the case, the phenomenon must first of all be ascribed to self-suggestion on the part of the patient, and the importance of this kind of »psychical treatment», in the case of primitive peoples, must not be underrated.

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[1]) See above, p. 112.

[2]) See below, p. 191.

[3]) Most »natural» remedies of the Chaco Indians are used for outward application, and they generally consist of decoctions made from certain leaves and roots. There is not much hygiene to be traced in the therapeutics of these Indians, nor do I believe that their remedies have much healing effect.

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Choroti SK6

CHAPTER XIV.

2. Other kinds of conjuration.

M 789 From what has been stated above of the social customs of the Chaco Indians, we realize that there is hardly any important event in the life of these natives which is not celebrated with religious or magical ceremonies of some kind. Generally these ceremonies are simple: drumming, the shaking of rattles, dancing and chanting form the main features in all of them. A few words may be said in this connection about the magical instruments, the *drum* and the *rattle*.

M C 789 534 The drum, which is called *usyúk* by the Choroti, *huitsyúk* by the Mataco and *kaltaki* by the Tobas, is known to all Pilcomayo tribes, although it is nowadays little used by the Bolivian Tobas. It is a simple instrument, consisting of a small clay pot which is covered with a goat's or deer's skin. In beating the drum only one stick is used. Generally the pot is partly filled with water — a detail which I cannot exactly account for, since it has no perceptible influence upon the tone of the instrument. Probably the water is believed to eke out in some way its magical efficacy. M C 789 534 The drum is the principal magical instrument of the Argentine Mataco who use the rattle gourd less, whereas, on the other hand, the Choroti, who also use both instruments, seem to appreciate the rattle more. In a Mataco village the drum is at work nearly every day: sometimes the spirit of a dead Indian is frightened away with it, sometimes other evil spirits, disease-spirits, spirits of hurricanes, tempests, drought, etc. are conjured with it; sometimes the Indians try to influence the good spirits animating trees and plants with it, so as to effect an abundant harvest of algaroba and chañar. The Choroti again mainly use the drum during the algaroba season, when the instrument is beaten both day and night. In a Choroti village where I lived for several months, an Indian sorcerer was specially engaged for this important ceremony.

[p. 155]

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The object of the drumming was to »hury on« the ripening of the algaroba and the chañar fruits, and at the same time to frighten away the evil spirits of hurricanes and tempests which frequently blight these trees at the time when they are flowering. Drought is another great danger to a rich algaroba and chañar harvest. By means of drumming the demons, who cause drought by keeping rain back, are conjured. In some cases it seems as if the drumming Indian, by the very time in which he is beating his drum, were imitating the fall of the rain-drops. The Choroti drummer seldom wears the rattle-belt (*tahús*), which on the other hand seems to be regarded as indispensable by the Mataco drummer. The latter, when he is beating the drum, continually moves his body up and down and from one side to the other in order that the rattle which he wears round the waist may make a noise.

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The other of the two principal magical instruments of the Chaco Indians is the rattle gourd, called *pöetá* by the Tobas, *votsotáh* by the Mataco, and *pelīte* by the Choroti. It consists of a round or oval bottle-gourd, hollowed out through a small opening in the tapering stem, and then filled with dry seeds, generally of tusca, small shells, beads, or other things producing a rattling sound. The outside is often ornamented with lines, triangles, squares, or other geometric designs. The instrument, when shaken, is believed to have a remarkable »power«, which is partly due to the magical properties of the gourd itself, partly to the seeds or other things with which it is filled, partly to the geometric figures with which the outside of the gourd is ornamented. The instrument is used much on the same occasions and for the same purposes as the drum. I have stated, however that the *Choroti* not only use the *pelīte* to frighten away or conjure evil spirits in general, but also for certain positive ends. To shake the rattle is in the Choroti language called *nekeālitse;* when it is shaken for a special purpose they use the expression *nekeālitse simā*, which means more or less: »to shake the rattle to obtain something«. Thus I have mentioned that during the marriage and courtship dances such young men as are despised by the girls are in the habit of shaking their rattles in order to »hurry on« the latter and to have greater success in love. Similarly, when a young man goes out to find a bride in connection with the dances, his father at home continually shakes the rattle to »hurry on« the girls on behalf of his son and promote his important undertaking. There are many other instances of the same kind. When the Choroti women go out in the forest in the morning to collect algaroba beans for the brewing of the sacred beer or other wild

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The ceremony *Kau'uepók* among the Choroti. During the algaroba season the drum is beaten day and night with a view to »hurrying on« the ripening of the fruits.

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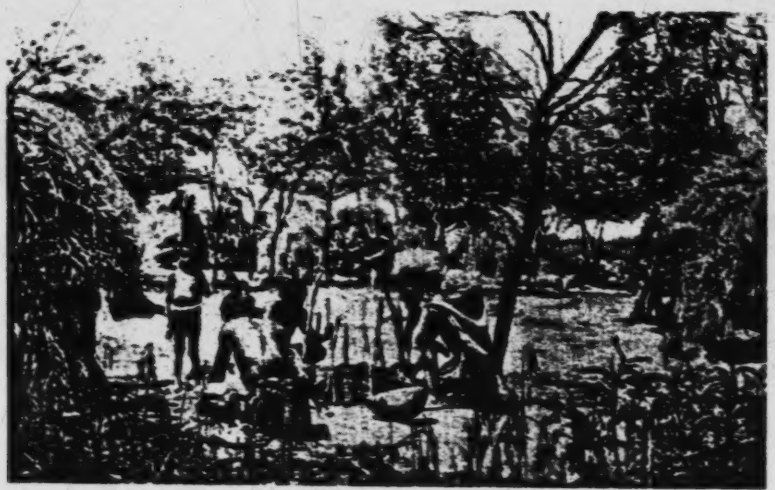

Preparations being made for the great drinking-feast among the Choroti. A goat's hide is fixed in the ground so as to form a vessel, in which the beer is brewed.

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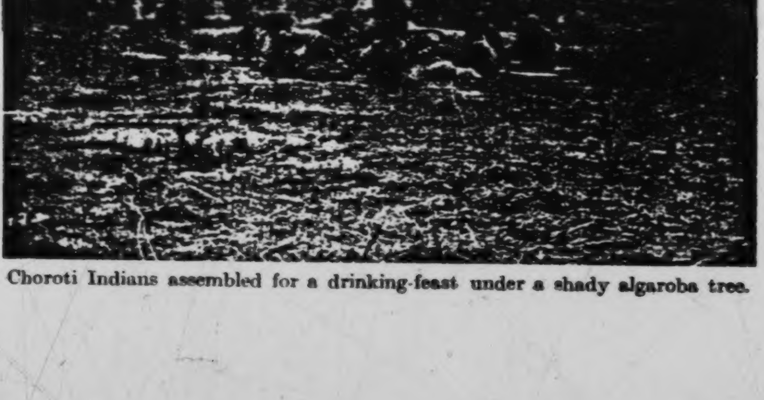

Choroti Indians assembled for a drinking-feast under a shady algaroba tree.

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Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

fruits, their husbands at home shake their rattles the whole day in the belief that the rattling will help them to find and to collect great quantities of the important fruit. »Very soon will the woman be back with much algaroba». In the same way good luck is secured for a fishing expedition. Whereas the younger men go out to the river with their nets, the old men stay at home and »hurry on» the fish on their behalf by vigorously shaking their rattles. C 789

It is difficult to make out exactly the train of thought underlying this curious custom. One might think that the Indians mean to frighten away, by their rattles, the evil spirits which impede success in an important enterprise, and in part it is no doubt so; but the chief idea seems to be another. The very movements, together with the »power» emanating from the magical instrument, are evidently believed to exert a direct, mysterious influence upon natural processes and even upon human thoughts and feelings. In other words, the effects seem to follow mainly on the principles of sympathetic magic. The same ideas, as we shall presently find, underlie the Indian dances in many cases.

The *Tobas* call the ceremony of shaking the rattle gourd *poketá danyakkó*. It is the general way of expelling evil demons which move about at night, causing sickness, tempests, thunder-storms, etc. Conjurations directed against evil spirits operating in destructive hurricanes and tempests are particularly frequent. Since these usually begin at night, conjurations with the rattle gourd always take place at that time. One of the medicine-men places himself outside the houses and chants a monotonous chant accompanying himself with the rattle. In these chants as usual, no words are pronounced; they merely consist in the repeating of sounds like a—a—a... ha-ha-ha-ha, etc. The power lies in the voice itself. The chant is always begun in a loud voice which is heard far away; then the voice gradually dies down so that the last tones are only perceived as a low mumbling; finally one can only hear the dull sound of the rattle which the sorcerer goes on shaking uninterruptedly. After a while he starts again from the beginning in the same way as before, and so forth. This conjuration is not seldom continued with a prayer addressed to the »good spirit». T 789 T 789 533

Various important incidents in the social life of the Tobas, such as the birth of a child, the initiation of young girls at the time of puberty, and deaths, are celebrated with *poketá danyakkó* conjurations. The most important occasion on which the rattle and the drum are used is, however, among all tribes *the preparation of fermented drinks*. T 789 273

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We have already seen that the most appreciated of these drinks is algaroba beer, which by the Mataco and the Choroti is called *atãs*, by the Tobas again *maplyi*. The tree itself and its fruit is called *oáh* in the Mataco and the Choroti language, in the Toba language *map*. The sacred beer is prepared with the utmost care and with certain religious or magical ceremonies. At this preparation there appears a strict division of labour between men and women. Although the women are not allowed to drink of the beer, they seemingly perform the larger part of the work. They collect the fruit in the forest, carrying it home in their large caraguatá bags, and afterwards mash it in mortars. Some old women start to chew the fruit, mixing it well with saliva, whereupon they spit it out into a goat's hide, fixed in the ground by means of sticks in such a way that it forms a sort of vessel. The goat's hide is used by the Choroti and by the Argentine Mataco, whereas the Tobas and the Bolivian Mataco use a wooden trough for the purpose. Lastly, hot water is poured over the mashed fruit.

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These preparations require nearly a whole day. The most essential thing still remains, namely the fermentation, and to effect this is a duty solely incumbent on the men, since women as a rule do not take part in conjurations. The fermentation is sacred, because it means the birth of the good spirit. Now this happens in the night, but night is the time when evil spirits move about. According to the belief of the Indians, the invisible persecutors appear in great numbers in order to prevent the birth of the good spirit and interfere with the drink so that it cannot ferment and is entirely spoiled. Therefore special precautions must be taken for the critical time. The brewing of the algaroba beer for the great festivals during the algaroba season is — especially among the primitive Choroti — a matter that concerns the whole community. Hence, at the approach of night, the men arrive from all houses with their rattle gourds, sit round the hide or trough. and begin to chant a noisy, monotonous song without words, shaking the rattles in the rhythm of their chant. This ceremony is called by the Choroti *níssammaha oáh*, by the Tobas *niapilák map*. and its most conspicuous object is to prevent the spirits from spoiling the beer. Since the new moon is believed to promote fermentation. a moonlight night is preferably chosen for the ceremony. The chant is typical of the Indian conjurations in the Chaco. It is always begun in a loud voice; then the voice gradually dies down, so that the last tones are only heard as a low and distant muttering. Thereupon they start again from the beginning, and so forth. In addi-

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tion to the men shaking rattles, one or more Indians are beating drums M T
and chanting. These noisy ceremonies are continued with short intervals C
during the whole night. When one party of Indians are tired and stop 273
to rest for a moment, they are relieved by another party, since it is
considered very important that there should be no interruption in the
ceremonies; otherwise they would lose something of their effect. In the
early morning the danger is believed to have passed; the fermentation
has taken place, and the evil spirits have not been able to approach the
drink and spoil it.

Although this negative object of the rites is particularly emphasized
by the Indians, they also have a positive object which is indicated by the
very expression »hurry on the fermentation». As we have already seen,
the fruit of which the drink is made is believed to be animated by a spirit,
and it is the same spirit that is active in the fermented, intoxicating
beer. The rites described, while they are supposed to keep off evil spirits,
are also intended to influence magically the plant-spirit itself and M
to bring it to its highest point of development, which is marked by the
fermentation. This is partly effected through the chanting, the shaking T
of rattles, and the drumming, partly through the procedure of mixing C
the mashed fruit with saliva. The saliva really has the property of bringing [827
about fermentation, and this phenomenon is explained by the
superstitious Indian as due to the supernatural virtues which this 888]
secretion is believed to possess. Even the fact that only *old* women
chew the fruit is probably not accidental. Old people have by nature
a stronger magical power than the young and their saliva has therefore
greater efficacy.

The Chaco Indians not only try to promote the growth of the fruits T
by shaking rattles and drumming, but also by *dancing*. Thus the Toba 789
dance *Xahót dónnaran* is not only performed in cases of sickness, but
also with a view to »hurrying on» the chanar fruit (*niapilák tákkai*). Once T
I witnessed such a ceremony. The chañar fruit — next to the algaroba [262
the most important of the fruits growing in the Chaco forests — reaches
maturity in the month of October and forms the staple food of the 824]
Indians during that month. The dance was performed in the following
way. The fruit gathered in during the day was spread out on cloths T
or big hides on the ground outside the houses, where they are generally [251]
laid to dry. The dance took place at night. A young man began to dance
alone, stamping alternately with his feet on the ground, without using
any rattle, and chanting at first in a low voice. Gradually his movements

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T 789 grew faster and faster, and the chanting accompanying them louder and louder. Soon he seized his magical instrument, the bell rattle called *heligday*, and shook it at first slowly and gradually faster, keeping time with his steps. When the dance reached its culmination, the feet of the dancer moved with intense rapidity, the chanting developed into an inarticulate yelling, and the man seemed to be in a real state of ecstasy. The other men also began to take part in the dance, accelerating their movements as well as their chanting gradually like the principal dancer, and accompanying themselves with their rattles. In this way the noisy performance was continued for several hours. Its object, as the Indians told me, was to promote the ripening of the chañar fruit. The dance seemed to have particular reference to the fruits already gathered, since the effect of all similar Indian dances usually follows on the principle of *pars pro toto*. The Indians evidently believe that the fast movements of the dancer in connection with the chanting and rattling are able to exert a mysterious influence upon the spirit animating the fruit, and the influence is not limited to the fruits gathered at the moment, but according to magical principles is believed to be extended to all plants of the species.

M 789 535 Similarly the *Mataco* try to promote the processes of nature by dancing. Typical of this was a dance which Mataco and Choroti Indians once arranged in common at the sugar factories in northern Argentine, where they were employed as labourers to cut the cane. The dance was a kind of *Nahûtsak* the object of which was to hurry on the ripening of the sugar plant. The Bolivian Mataco, some of which cultivate the sugar cane, are known to perform this magic dance in their own land too. A bundle of sugar canes, tied together, was held by two Indians in an erect position on the ground. Round these men the other Indians formed a circle. The women joined in, forming a larger circle behind the men. All started to dance, moving round the canes, stamping alternately with their feet on the ground and chanting with a loud voice, keeping time with their steps.

This magical dance to promote the growth of the sugar cane is obviously based on the same principle as the Toba dance just mentioned: the few canes round which the Mataco Indians performed their dance represented the whole field of sugar cane. The idea evidently underlying the rite was that after these specimens of the plant had been properly prepared — *i. e.* the indwelling spirit influenced in the desired direction — the rest of the canes in the fields were likewise favourably influenced.

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I have so far only spoken of the dances and other rites which take place at the preparation of the sacred drinks. During the algaroba season, festivals are held almost continuously, and these festivals are chiefly celebrated with drinking-bouts and dancing. Those of the Chaco Indians who have been in contact with the whites and seen the great festival with which, in Argentine and Boliva, they celebrate their carnival in February say that the algaroba season is their own carnival time and that they, too, have their carnival dances. The dances which among the Choroti take place at that time have partly been described before in connection with the customs practised by these Indians at courtship and marriage. In addition to the customary courtship dance *Avăshe*, the great festival, which is called *lăkineue*, is celebrated with two more dances, those called *Ahlénta* and *Jóhlöki*. *Jóhlöki* is the name by which the Choroti call the Tobas, a fact that seems to indicate that the Choroti have borrowed the dance from their neighbours. The Tobas themselves call the dance *Nahotti*. It is a ring-dance; the dancing men are arranged in a circle and have their arms round each other's waists, moving round to the right or to the left to the rhythm of a chant. The *Ahlénta* again is identical with the Toba dance *Nomi*. Nevertheless, the Choroti seem to have borrowed it from their southern neighbours, the Ashluslay Indians on the lower Pilcomayo, a fact that may be inferred from the name; for just as *Jóhlöki* means »the Toba dance», so *Ahlénta* means »the Ashluslay dance» (Choroti *Ahle* = Ashluslay). I would add in this connection that the dances of the Chaco tribes are, in the main, common to all the tribes; there are certain dances which occur among different tribes under different names.

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The chants sung at the dances are rather monotonous and are composed of a series of words which apparently have no meaning; for instance in the *Jóhlöki*:

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Hă-e-se-ália,
Hiáh-hia-ália,
He-éh-hia-ália, *hia-ália*,
Hi-áh,
Hă-he-éh, *hă-he-éh*,
Hă-se-éh, *hă-se-éh*, *hă-se-éh*, etc.

Only the younger unmarried men perform these dances, the older ones being constantly engaged in drinking algaroba beer (*atăs*). Unmarried girls are allowed to be present, but as we have seen they do not as a rule

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796 take part in the dances, although courtship is connected with them.
535 After the dances sexual intercourse is indulged in by the partakers in
the festival, each girl choosing for herself a lover for that night among
[786] the dancing men.

Nordenskiöld mentions the Choroti as an instance of Indians who
535 have purely profane dances, pointing out that they have special refer-
796 ence to the sexual life. The latter of course is true of some dances; but
Nordenskiöld's mistake in regarding the Choroti dances as purely profane
177 is due to the fact that he did not study their customs thoroughly and therefore failed to see the ideas underlying them. In fact, it is clear that the Choroti dances are gradually losing their original magical or religious significance and have a tendency to degenerate into mere amusements, a course of development which we frequently notice with regard to Indian customs. But even the Choroti dances still, in the main, retain their ceremonial character. Thus my Indian informant, an elderly man, told me that when the Indians dance they collect the whole supply of fruit gathered for the occasion in the house of an old man, i.e. a man initiated in the magic art; and *they believe that the dancing will make the fruit abundant* — not only these particular fruits, but those growing in the forest as well. The principle is again the same as in the Mataco dance to promote the growth of the sugar cane and in the Toba dance to make the chañar fruit abundant. As we have seen, the drumming, practised by the Choroti and the Mataco during the »seasons», has to a certain extent a similar object. That the chanting which accompanies the dances has at the same time for its object to frighten away evil spirits, is evident.

171 From this point of view it is interesting to compare the ceremonies performed by the Choroti during the »seasons» and the sexual liberty connected with them with certain »mysteries» of a similar kind practised by some Indian tribes in other parts of South America. Thus the Yurupary ceremonies of the Uaupes Indians in north-western South America present a close analogy to them. Among these tribes also certain mysterious ceremonies, consisting chiefly in dancing, are performed at those seasons of the year when the most important fruits reach maturity. The object of these ceremonies appears to be to influence the spirits which are thought to animate the plants and thus to promote fertility. Many facts show that these spirits are nothing but souls of the dead which have taken up their abode in the trees and plants. Moreover, at these mysteries sexual intercourse is promiscuously indulged in by those

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taking part in them, evidently with a view to propagating the useful plant spirits and giving them an opportunity to enter into the women and to be reborn in human form.[1])

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I believe that in the Choroti dances performed during the algaroba season and the sexual licentiousness which forms part of them we have in fact remains of similar mysteries in the Chaco, which for one reason or another have partly lost their original significance, having now at the outset only the general character of joyful harvest festivals.

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Again, the great festival dance of the Tobas is the *Nomi* already mentioned. It is performed on all particularly solemn occasions, but especially during the algaroba season. It is the great »carnival» dance of the Tobas. Even some time before the proper season begins the Indians start to dance, believing that by dancing they can accelerate the ripening of the fruits (*niapilák map*), just as the Mataco and the Choroti believe that they can hurry on the ripening of the fruits and the coming of the season by beating drums. In dancing the Indians arrange themselves in a long line, or so as to form a crescent. With arms interlaced round each other's waists they move, running alternately to the right and to the left and at the same time forwards to the other end of the dancing place where the chain is broken. Thereupon they move back in the same T
way. As is customary in the Chaco, the dancers themselves chant the [533]
measure of their steps in a loud voice. Similarly the women do not take part in the dance although they are allowed to be present as onlookers. — During the season the dance goes on daily and is believed to influence continually the growth of the fruits.

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But the *Nomi* dance is performed during the algaroba season with another object in view also. The Tobas believe that at this happy and joyful time they receive invisible guests in great numbers. These are the *kadepakál* or *ilúh*, i.e. the spirits of departed Toba Indians, who also want to be present at the joyful festivals and to take part in the drinking-bouts. But these guests, who are feared or at any rate awake uncanny feelings in the living, are not welcome and do not receive any sort of cult. On the contrary, measures are taken to keep them off, and the Indians told me that precisely this is part of the object of the dance *Nomi*. The dancing men by means of their movements and their loud chanting prevent the spirits of the dead from approaching the villages or the place where the drinking and feasting goes on.

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[1]) See my *Civilization of the South American Indians*, pp. 427 sqq.

T A peculiarity of the *Nomi* is that it is the only Toba dance which
535 takes place in the day-time; in fact, it is *always* performed during the
789 day, just as other dances are always performed at night. Of the reason of this I am not quite sure, but it is probably to be sought in the particular character of the dance. Most Indian dances are in their nature conjurations of evil spirits, and since these spirits move about especially at night, it is conceivable that the dances are, as a rule, night ceremonies. The dance *Nomi* again, chiefly has for its object the promotion of fertility and the ripening of the algaroba fruit and therefore takes place in the
T day, just as the Choroti dances, in so far as they have the same object,
often take place in the day. It is true that the *Nomi* is also intended
775 to conjure the ghosts of the dead, but these differ from other spirits
precisely in that they are generally believed to visit their living relatives in the day-time, when the drinking-feasts are celebrated.

M The Mataco also have their festival dance, which in their language is
789 called *Nakātin* or *Katināh*. It corresponds exactly to the Toba dance
Nomi, and is performed during the algaroba season with the same
535 object, namely, to secure an abundant harvest and to keep off the spirits
of the dead, called *kasītah* by the Mataco.

M Whether the Mataco have been influenced in this festival dance by
171 their neighbours the Tobas, with whom they have considerable intercourse, I cannot say, but the idea that the dead like to visit the living at the time of the harvest and at the great drinking-feasts, is certainly familiar to many South American tribes. Thus the *Avas* and the *Chāné*, who now live on the western border of the Chaco, but came originally to these regions from the north and cannot be reckoned among the Chaco tribes proper especially practise dancing at their drinking-
000 feasts. Since on this particular point there is an interesting analogy
between the customs of the Avas and those of the Chaco tribes, I shall mention what I know about the drinking-feasts of the Avas and the Chané. Their sacred drink is maize beer, called *cangüi* in the Guarani language, which exactly corresponds to the sacred beers brewed from the algaroba and some other fruits in the Chaco. The *cangüi* festivals of the Avas as well as the dance performed in connection with them have been described by the Catholic missionaries, but none of them seems to have realized the religious significance of these ceremonies. The majority of these Indians are now Christians in name and strongly influenced by Christian civilization, having consequently dropped or greatly modified many of their ancient customs. I myself have only witnessed their

dances at the carnival of the whites, in which the Avas sometimes take 000 part, performing their old native festival dance.

The great drinking-feasts (*arete*) of the Avas and the Chané took place annually after the maize harvest. Both men and women took part in them, all being assembled round a large and beautifully ornamented clay vessel (*yambui*), filled with the sacred maize beer. At first they drank ceremoniously, keeping silence for about two hours. Suddenly they stood up and started to dance and chant. Two of the oldest chiefs or medicine-men, who led the dance, stood in the middle holding the *yandúa* (*yandu* = ostrich), a sort of dancing-staff, about four meters in length, with big ostrich plumes attached to the top, and arranged in such a way that the whole thing looked like a huge umbrella. With this staff the leaders marked time during the dance, by striking it hard on the ground. Round them the other men ranged themselves, and behind the men the women, holding each other by the hands and forming a larger circle. The dancing of the former consisted in bending the right knee a little and straightening it again keeping time with the *yandúa* which was continually moved by the leaders; the dancing ot the women, again, consisted in taking alternately one step backwards and another step forwards, each step being accompanied by a slight inclination of the body. The song chanted during the dance was rather monotonous and, like most Indian chants, difficult to describe.

There are several details in this dance which plainly reveal its religious character. Thus the *yandúa* is a magical dancing-staff of the same kind as is found among many South American tribes. The staff helps to conjure the spirits and its magical power depends essentially on the ostrich feathers, which as a matter of fact are commonly used as charms by the Indians, especially in Chaco. The same may be said of the rest of the equipment which was deemed necessary on such occasions. Among the Chané in northern Argentine, who for centuries have had the same culture and much the same religious ceremonies as the Avas, I found a curious festive dress made solely of ostrich feathers 1) which, according to the statement of the Indians, was formerly worn at their great *cangüi* feasts and dances. Broad bands of big ostrich feathers tied together were attached to the head, to the breast, and to the stomach, hanging down also over the thighs, so that almost the whole body of the dancer was covered with the feathers, which gave him a very fantastic appear-

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1) This feather dress is now in the ethnographic museum of Helsingfors.

000 ance. The older Indians still knew that the object of the dance at which this dress was worn was to conjure the spirits of the dead, the *añas*, who were believed to come in great numbers to the annual drinking-feasts with the intention of taking part in these joyful entertainments. But the ostrich dress was not the only thing worn on these occasions. Masks were also worn and rattles of hard shells were tied round the legs. The masks and the rattles, together with the ostrich dress and the *yandúa*, formed a real magical apparatus intended to drive off and conjure the unwelcome guests. We know that masks are especially worn by the Indians at death-feasts and that they are, or at least originally have been, purely magical things comparable to drums, rattles, etc., with which supernatural beings are influenced. Even in our days the Avas and Chané use masks at the carnival of the whites in connection with the dance performed on that occasion. They are rudely carved out of a soft kind of wood into the likeness of a human face and are afterwards, according to a common Indian custom, thrown away or destroyed. The mask, which has been tabooed or infected because of its contact with the dangerous spirits, can no longer be used.

The participation of the half-civilised Indians, with their native religious ceremonies, in the carnival of the whites, is an interesting phenomenon. It shows us the amalgamation of a Christian and a purely heathen festival, an amalgamation which of course is psychologically possible only under the assumption that there is an intrinsic connection between them.

226 535 As to the magical dances of the Chaco Indians, I may mention that the Mataco and the Choroti have a dance, the particular object of which is to secure good luck in fishing. The Mataco call this ceremonial dance *Vúokoi*, the Choroti again *Siyúhe*. *Siyúhe* is the name of the kind of fish called *bocachico* in Spanish, the most common fish in the Pilcomayo river. Fishing is the main livelihood of the tribes who have settled on the banks of the river, and the fishing season proper begins at the end of May or the beginning of June, when the dry season in the strict sense begins and the water in the river is low. I have not seen this dance performed, I have only been told about it by the Indians. It is a sort of ring-dance, the Indians making movements in quick time round a live fish placed on the ground, while an Indian standing outside the circle tries to catch the fish. Immediately after the dance is finished the Indians run down to the river, and, thanks to the dance, will have good luck. The dance is believed to have the power of making the fish

assemble in great quantities in a limited area, so that the fishing men 226
will be able to catch them easily with their nets. 535

In this magical dance we easily recognize the same principle as for instance in the Choroti dance *Avúshe*, when the young men try to »hurry on» the girls by dancing and chanting around them. In the dance *Siyúhs*, the live fish, which is the direct object of the ceremony, evidently represents the rest of the fish in the river, which consequently, according to the principles of homoeopathic magic, is favourably influenced.

A few general words may be added as to dancing and chanting as 789
magical rites. The Chaco Indians ascribe great efficacy to the singing
or chanting which accompanies nearly all their magical and religious 535
ceremonies. We have also seen that in this kind of conjuration as a rule 533
no words are uttered; the »power» lies in the voice itself, being an emanation of the general magical power which, according to Indian belief, is inherent in the human body itself. It is exactly the same with the rhythmical movements of the body carried out in dancing, by which a part of the energy latent in the organism, so to speak, is released into actuality. Combined with the chanting and with the powerful sounds of drums and rattles, they are believed to act irresistibly upon supernatural beings.

But there is one more idea connected with dancing. One of the lead- 789
ing principles in the Indian conjurations is the principle of *imitation*. 535
By imitating a person or a supernatural being in his movements, voice, or external appearance the magician believes that he can get hold of his soul or essence and thus be able to control him completely. Now, as a matter of fact, the Chaco Indians believe that *the evil spirits themselves dance* when at night they approach the villages in order to visit their inhabitants with sickness and misfortune. This idea is rightly [776]
expressed by Pelleschi with special reference to the Argentine Mataco, when he says of the *ahút* among other things: »These spirits . . . fly with the wind, following it and producing the same sounds as the storm; they dance in a ring round the tolderias (villages) or round the toldos (huts) of the persons whom they want to harm».[1]) This statement applies to all Chaco Indian beliefs. Since the natives fancy that dancing is the favourite way in which the spirits move, it is in accordance with their magical ideas that they should try to keep them back and counteract their evil influences by performing the same sort of movements, and in general by imitating their manners as faithfully as possible.

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[1]) Pelleschi, *Los indios Matacos y su lengua*, p. 94.

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789 sible. I may add here that the Choroti men are in the habit of wearing
535 round their neck a kind of flat whistle made of wood and ornamented
[534] with incised figures. With these whistles they produce shrill sounds
from time to time during the dances, which are supposed to imitate
the sounds of the spirits and have the power of frightening them away.

How the Indians believe themselves to be able to influence even
789 natural processes by imitating them, appears in an interesting way
252 from the following curious ceremony which I witnessed among the Choroti. These Indians cultivate the maize only on a very limited scale, and it is among them a rare cereal. In a village the women had obtained some maize and were cooking it on the open place outside the huts. While the maize pots were boiling, the women sang in a loud, quavering, guttural voice, which it is impossible to describe exactly, an extremely monotonous chant, which was evidently meant to imitate the monotonous sound and the regular, bubbling movements of the water boiling in the pot. The women explained to me that *in this way the pot would boil well and the maize soon become soft*. The chanting was thus a means of »hurrying on» a natural process according to the same magical principles as we have noticed in several other cases.

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CHAPTER XV.

Prayer and offering.

Prayer and offering form the main elements of religious worship or cult, and of such a cult only few traces are to be found among the primitive tribes east of the Andes. Still I have pointed out that the invocation of the »good spirit» in the treatment of sick persons really has the character of a prayer, and this is particularly the case among the Tobas. The Tobas are also the only Indians in the Gran Chaco, or at least on the river Pilcomayo, who make a primitive kind of offering by which the spirits are propitiated. The little I have to state about prayer and offering among the Pilcomayo Indians therefore has exclusive reference to the *Tobas*. 182

To pray is, among the Tobas, called *hayeyditten*, and by this expression the Indians first of all indicate the invocation by which the medicine-man summons his guardian spirit to help him to subdue the evil demons. How the medicine-men pray when they are curing sick people, we have already seen. It is a kind of chant in which sometimes a few words are incessantly repeated, sometimes again, no real words are pronounced, the devotional tone alone indicating that a prayer is being made.

When a medicine-man cures a sick person it is as a rule only the former and not the patient that prays to the deity. In prolonged cases of sickness it is, however, no rare thing to see suffering patients themselves praying to their guardian spirits for help and alleviation. A common prayer formula in such cases is the following:

Agai nõ, achi mah hey.

the meaning of which is about this:

[p. 171]

782 »(Good spirit), let no more evil befall me, I have already suffered much!»

Or, in an abbreviated form:

Agai nôtta,
»I suffer, may (the good spirit let) the evil subside!»

On one occasion I saw a young Toba man, who had suddenly turned almost totally blind on account of some severe disease of the eyes, saying this prayer to his good spirit. Sitting on the ground, with his head bent down and with trembling knees, he repeated these words in a low voice for many hours.

In other cases of affliction, prayers to the good spirit are made much in the same way, but it is only seldom that one is able to be present at this worship and to hear clearly the words that are uttered. Sometimes the ceremony begins with a conjuration (*pokeiá danyakkó*) directed against the evil spirits and is thereafter continued with a prayer addressed to the good spirit. Thus once I witnessed a conjuration in the evening performed by a sorcerer with the rattle gourd, the object of which was to prevent the feared outburst of a hurricane which would be destructive to the flowering trees. Having shaken his rattle and chanted for a while the sorcerer stopped. A little while later on, the miauling of a cat, the sacred animal of the *peyák nôtta*, was heard and he at once continued with a prayer chant addressed to the spirit. That he was saying a prayer could readily be inferred from the devotional tone and the absence of any rattle accompaniment. The chant soon developed into a real conversation with the deity, carried out in a low voice. The words uttered could not be distinguished, but the spirit was besought to be good and to keep off the destructive demons from the village. — The Indians stated that such prayers are sometimes made in order to stop or prevent foul weather.

When afflicted by a heavy sand-storm or tempest the Tobas are also in the habit of uttering the abbreviated prayer formula:

Agai, nôtta,
»It hurts me (I suffer), may the evil subside».

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726 Lastly, the Tobas prepare themselves for a war expedition or battle not only by different kinds of conjuration, but also by prayers addressed to the *peyák nôtta* of the war.

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Real sacrifices are completely unknown to the Tobas as to most other South American Indians, and about other kinds of offerings there is not much to say. I have mentioned the tobacco offering which the Toba medicine-men are in the habit of making to the disease-demon when expelling him from the body of the patient. As pointed out, this offering is only apparently a gift to the spirit; its real object is to stupefy him and to help to subdue him, since the tobacco is regarded by the Indians as a powerful antidote against evil spirits. Such magical offerings are quite common in South America. 782 755 789 824

The guardian spirits which most Toba men are believed to possess are not only propitiated with prayers but sometimes also with real offerings. The spirit seems to be somewhat capricious and does not always listen to the prayers addressed to him. It happens therefore, that a Toba Indian, when afflicted with a severe disease, begins to negotiate with his tutelary deity, promising to give him a gift, for instance a mantle, a waist-belt, or some other valuable thing as a reward if the will come and cure him. The Indian puts these things in a bag and hangs them up in a tree or some other place outside the house as offerings to the deity. — These votive offerings for recovering health are the only kind of sacrifice customary among the Pilcomayo Indians. 776 782 755

CHAPTER XVI.

Ceremonial fasting.

M 185 262 Fasting or restrictions in diet play an important part among the religious practices of the Chaco Indians. In most cases ceremonial fasting seems to be due to the belief that in eating man may come in contact with dangerous disease-bringing spirits which are in some way associated with the food. Since harmful spirits are supposed to have a special liking for certain kinds of food, these kinds of food are in some cases taboo to the Indians. The common belief that the spirits of the dead reincarnate themselves in various animals has in the first place given rise to all sorts of food restrictions, for the meat of such animals is generally, although not invariably, regarded as taboo.

M 262 The Indians of the Gran Chaco, dependent upon very restricted sources of subsistence, as a rule utilize everything that can possibly be used as food. Thus several animals are eaten which we do not regard as fit for food, and if a certain animal is despised, this is, as a rule due to superstitious ideas of one kind or another. C 262 The *Choroti* for instance among other things regard such animals as locusts, certain beetles, lizards, and a kind of rat as delicacies; of others the fox is considered edible, as also of birds the owl and a certain kind of vulture (called *carancho* in Spanish, *Polyborus vulgaris*). In regard to the fox, the owl, [519] and the vulture, however, there is the restriction that only *old* people can eat them, not young people and children, whom such food would do harm. In several cases I received from the younger Choroti men the explanation: »The old ones can eat the meat of this or that animal, not we». This means that such animals or birds as those just mentioned are in some way associated with evil spirits; the eating of the meat of these animals therefore would have disastrous consequences for young people and children who have less power of resistance against evil

[p. 174]

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Choroti SK6

spirits, but not for old men who are initiated in the magic art and know how to render them harmless. — It is curious that on the other hand an animal like the *deer* is regarded by the Choroti as absolutely unfit for food. Not even old men would touch the flesh of deer, believing that if they did, they would die. This is due to the belief, mentioned before, that the deer is an evil spirit (*móhsek*), the reincarnation of the spirit of a sorcerer, a superstition which is widespread among the South American Indians and everywhere manifests itself in an aversion to eating the meat of this innocent animal. C 262

Ceremonial fasting, as we have seen, is prescribed among the Choroti and the Mataco on certain occasions which are regarded as important and critical in some respect. Thus the father has to restrict his diet when he is lying in couvade, and girls have to diet during their first menstruation. We have also seen that behind these practices there is the fear of evil spirits in one form or another. M 785

If disease and death bringing demons are believed to enter easily into the body with the food eaten, we can understand why eating is so often to the Indians a ceremonial business. This is also intelligible from the point of view that by eating an animal and coming in contact with its soul, a man may acquire the spiritual qualities of that animal. This idea explains the curious custom practised among the Tobas, that when a chief's daughter attains puberty, the men alone have to eat the meat of the ostrich, whereas the women eat the meat of the armadillo. As a general rule, both among the Tobas and among other Chaco Indians, men and women do not eat together but separately, the men first and the women afterwards. This custom is observed so strictly, that one may assume a particular superstition behind it. Moreover, when the Indians eat, they do not speak much with one another and do not like to be spoken to. Since they believe that man may evade evil spirits by keeping silence and avoiding attracting their attention, it is possible that the ceremonial character of their banquets is partly connected with this idea. And as women are especially believed to attract the spirits, this may be, or may originally have been, one reason why the men avoid eating with them. But it should also be remembered that in primitive societes eating together is believed to establish a mysterious union or connection between all those taking part in the common banquet. Since a strict distinction is made between a man's and a woman's spiritual qualities, it is not difficult to understand that the men avoid the company of the women on those occasions when they eat. However

M 264

M [562]

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Toba S/12

M 264 this may be, it is now impossible to get a positive explanation from the Indians themselves as to their real motives for observing this ancient custom.

T 262 The dietary rules observed by the **Tobas** are in many respects more detailed than those of other Chaco tribes. I have mentioned for instance that when a girl reaches the age of puberty she is bound to fast strictly, being particularly forbidden to eat fish and meat. On the other hand, she is enjoined to eat the leaves of the tusca tree and the leaves and fruit of the vine which the Tobas call *choróde*. These leaves and fruit probably possess some magical properties which are believed to have beneficial effects upon the girl. T [171] Dobrizhoffer, speaking of the puberty customs of the ancient Abipones, mentions that the girl had to abstain from fish and meat and was only allowed to feed on a little fruit which grows upon brambles and conduces much towards cooling the bloods. By this fruit he evidently meant the *tasi*-fruit (*choróde*) which is eaten on the same occasion by the Toba girls of the present day.

T M 262 841 Among the Tobas and the Mataco, and probably also among the Choroti, a woman is always bound to diet during her menstrual periods, since she is at these periods more or less exposed to supernatural dangers. The Toba woman carefully abstains from eating fish, and her only food is a dish prepared of boiled maize and called *euóki* in the Toba language. An infringement of these rules would be likely to bring about the terrible consequences which have been mentioned above. Similarly, when a child has been born in a family, both the father and the mother of the child must live on a restricted diet.

T 262 765 Again, after a Toba man has died, his widow, daughter, and other female relatives carefully avoid eating fish. If they infringe this rule, they will, according to the belief of the Tobas, sicken and die or go mad. Instead of fish, maize is eaten. Even some of the men observe the same custom, abstaining from fish for some time after the death of a relative.

T 262 All these food restrictions are, no doubt, based upon the same idea, namely, that evil spirits may hide in the forbidden food and gain entrance into the body if it is eaten. At any rate spirits are in some way associated with the food. With regard to the fish this is expressly stated. It is a curious fact that fish, which is the principal food of the Tobas, is so religiously shunned on certain occasions. Behind this superstition there are undoubtedly real experiences as to the harmful effects that the eating of fish may bring. Thus the Tobas assert that incautious

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Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

eating of fish at the beginning of the wet season is likely to cause malarial fever. T 262 What is particularly dangerous in the fish, as the Indians told me, is the stomach; an evil spirit may hide in it. Therefore a person must abstain from eating this kind of food when he or she is in a delicate condition and exposed to the attacks of supernatural enemies. After a death it is the death-demon that is believed to have possibly taken up its abode in the stomach of the fish. In general, the rules of diet, both in regard to fish and in regard to other kinds of food, are always more strict for the women than for the men, and this is naturally due to the belief that the former have by nature less power of resistance against evil spirits than the latter.

Several other food restrictions exist among the Chaco tribes, and most of them are due to superstitious ideas of one kind or another. Just as the Choroti shun the meat of the deer, so I found among the Toba men an aversion to the meat of the wild pig, although this is a very tasty food. This may possibly be due to the idea that the wild pig is a »female« animal, as is also the armadillo. T 775 At any rate the Tobas have the belief that the souls of women particularly reincarnate themselves in the wild pig. [825] All Chaco Indians likewise have an aversion to drinking the blood or milk of animals and eating the eggs of hens and of other birds. M 262 The Indians could give me no explanation as to this superstition, and it is possible that the original reasons for it are now forgotten. It is, however, highly probable that they shun blood and milk because they believe that the spirit or soul of the animal is in them. This is at any rate quite obvious with regard to blood, which plays an important part in native superstition. Thus among all tribes there appears a mysterious dread of shedding the blood of domestic animals. C [231] The Choroti for instance, when they have to slaughter a sheep or goat, never kill the animal by cutting its throat or shedding its blood in some other way, but always, according to old observance, by strangulation. The custom is professedly observed for fear of coming in contact with the blood of the animal. — For a similar reason, I believe, the Indians have originally abstained from eating eggs. The egg is the embryo of the bird, and in the embryo or foetus of an animal, according to primitive belief, its spirit has its abode in the same way as in its blood or milk. M 171 It is interesting in this connection to note what Mr. Grubb says of the analogous ideas of the Lenguas. »Milk, whether of the cow, goat, sheep, or mare, is never drunk. The older people seem to consider it unfit for them, and children are forbidden it because it is supposed that the milk upon which they

171 are nourished will influence them physically as well as in character, and the Indians have no desire that their children should in any way acquire the natures of such animals.[1])

262 826 774 The fear of eating the *heads* of certain animals is probably due to similar ideas. A menstruous woman, as we have seen, is forbidden to eat the head of a parrot, lest she should go mad or be changed into a tiger; and similarly a father, while he is observing the rules of the couvade, must abstain from eating the head of a cow. According to primitive belief the soul or vital power of the body is particularly concentrated in the hair and the head. That the head of a cow is especially regarded as taboo is comprehensible from the fact that animals imported by the whites are generally looked upon with superstitious fear and their flesh avoided by Indians still living in a state of nature.

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[1]) Grubb, *op. cit.* p. 137.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

CHAPTER XVII.

Magical ornaments and amulets.

In my *Civilization of the South American Indians* I have shown that M
most Indian ornaments have originally had a purely magical significance. 789
although among tribes affected by European culture they have
gradually lost this significance and become real »decorations«. Among
the Chaco Indians also this course of development is conspicuous, for
instance with regard to tattooing, body-painting, and the majority of
other personal ornaments. The principles of *tattooing*, as it is practised
by the Choroti, Mataco, and Tobas, have been set forth by me in a previous
chapter.[1]) Tattooing is first of all closely related to scarification
and bleeding, customs quite commonly practised by the Indians in all
parts of South America. Blood-letting is in itself regarded as a method M
of purifying the human organism from evil and impure spirits. The 783
spirits are supposed to enter the system, and especially to mix in the 827
blood, thus giving rise to ailments of different kinds and to a state of
weakness in the particular part of the body to which they have attached
themselves. The Indian thinks that by bleeding that part he will rid
himself of the dangerous intruder, just as he sometimes thinks it will
leave his body with the mere perspiration, and this belief is naturally
supported by the fact that in certain cases such purgations may really
give some relief. The Chaco Indians are quite familiar with this idea. C
Thus among the *Choroti* it is a common thing for the men to bleed 783
themselves with a sharp bone obtained from a certain »magical« animal
or a splinter of a certain wood before certain important undertakings. 827
Thus they say that, by drawing blood from the arm, the limb will get 224
more strength for pulling the bow; the practice is therefore especially

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[1]) See *supra*, pp. 89 sq.

[p. 179]

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

C 783 827 [324] resorted to before going out on a hunting expedition. If the arms fails or trembles in pulling the bow, its weakness is, according to the idea of the Choroti, due to the presence of a *mohsek* in the blood; and they think that the evil demon will leave the body with the blood drawn. The same custom is practised by other tribes of the Pilcomayo. Thus C 171 Nordenskiöld noticed it among the Ashlualay, although he did not understand its real meaning. After a trying fishing or hunting expedition, he says, the Indians may be seen to pierce their arms and legs furiously with hard wooden splinters, so that the blood flows in streams; and in order to get a keener sight to find the nests of the bees they likewise prick themselves above the eyes. In both cases the idea evidently is that the demon which causes the weakness or fatigue will be driven away from the body and perhaps killed with the pointed instrument.

M 304 783 The scars left by the cuts are tended with care and shown with satisfaction, indeed with pride. The Indians showed with apparent satisfaction even those cicatrices which the *palometa* fishes had inflicted on their body with their sharp teeth when they were bathing in the river. It is clear that according to the idea of the Indians not only the bleeding purges the body from impure matter and strengthens the limbs, but that the very scars which remain after the operation possess some mysterious power to keep off evil influences, a power which is much the same as that ascribed to real tattooing marks. This Indian view is especially conspicuous in regard to an operation which the whites sometimes perform upon Indians who have come in contact with European civilization, M 751 783 304 namely, vaccination. I could myself appreciate the extraordinary importance ascribed to scars when during my stay at Esperanza I vaccinated a number of Chaco Indians who were employed as labourers at the sugar factory. The Christians probably have no remedy which the natives understand so well as this one, and they therefore as a rule submitted to the vaccine inoculation without remonstration, in fact, with pleasure. The small indelible marks which remained were regarded with wonder and admiration, and it was perfectly understood that they were a sort of warranty that the terrible disease would not attack the person wearing them.

M 302 789 Of all personal ornaments *body-painting* is the most important. All Chaco tribes practise it, and men and women alike. In the Chaco, as in other parts of South America, body-painting is essentially a custom of magical significance, as one can easily find out by considering the circumstances under which it is practised. The favourite colour of the

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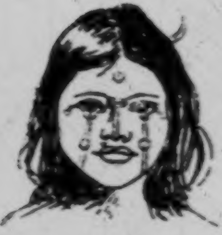
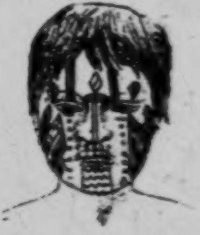


Choroti-Indians (Chaco).



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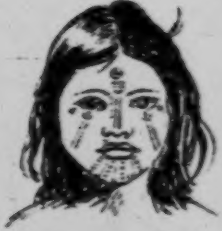

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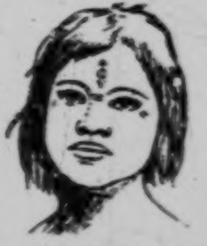

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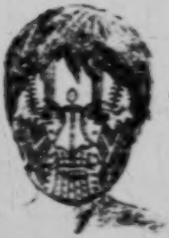

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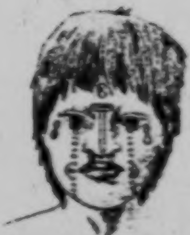

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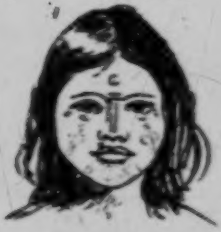
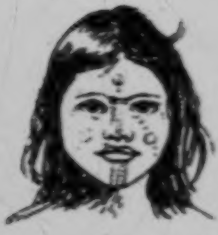


Choroti-Indians (Chaco).



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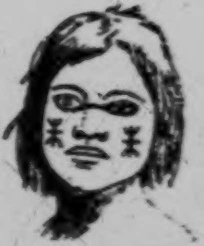

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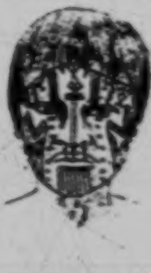

Toba-Indians (Chaco).

Tattooings of the Choroti and Toba Indians.

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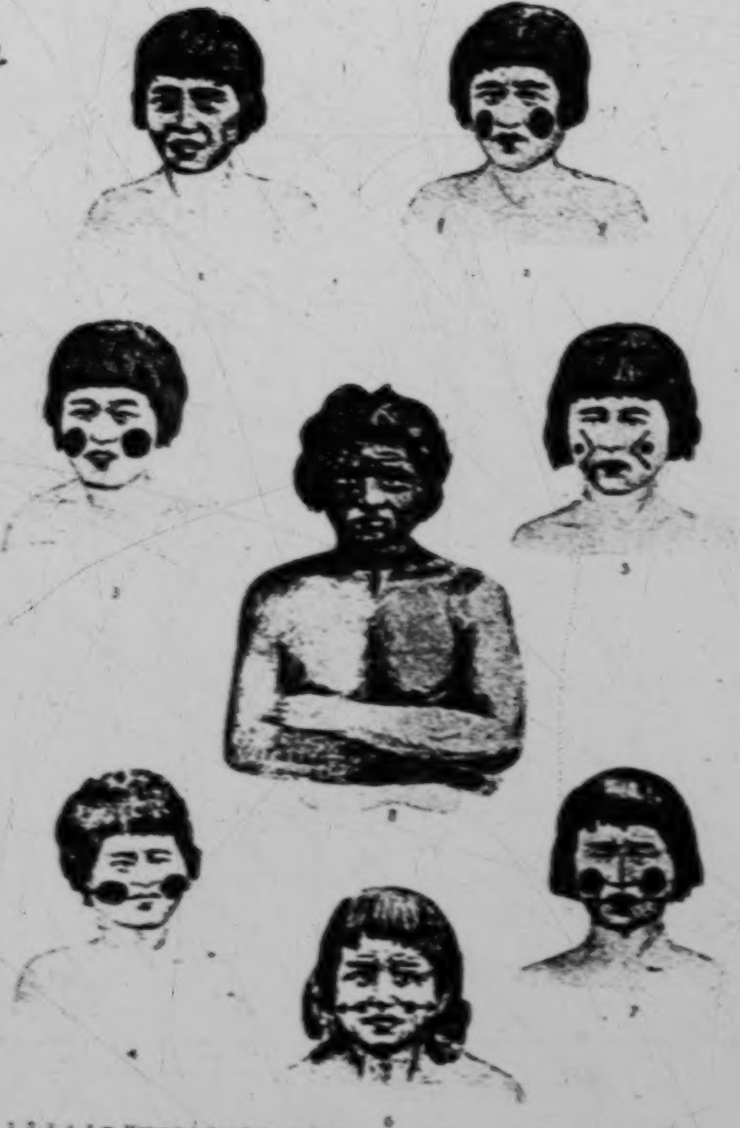

1, 2, 3, 4, 5 = Woman's body-painting for different occasions (at menstruation etc.). 6 = Ornamental body-painting after a death. 7 = Body-painting with charcoal after a death (woman's). 8 = War painting of the Tobas (face black with charcoal, breast and arms red with urucu).

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12

The favourit colour of the
Indians is red or vermilion, the paint being obtained from the seeds of M 302
the plant *Bixa orellana*. But this beautiful shrub does not grow in the 780
Gran Chaco. The Chaco tribes only obtain the paint they appreciate [386
so much from the Indians in the north by means of intertribal commerce. 439]

The Chaco Indians are also in the habit of blackening the face with
soot or charcoal on certain occasions. M 302

The typical way of painting the face both for men and women is either to colour the whole face and forehead red with *urucú*,[1] or black with charcoal, or only to apply red or black spots, lines, small squares etc. to the cheeks, to the nose, round the mouth and above the eyes. M
The eye, which is the organ of the most important sense and the one [826]
most exposed to disorders, is generally painted with special care. Sometimes the whole organ is circumscribed by a red line, sometimes red and black lines are only drawn along the upper part of it on the spot normally occupied by the eyebrows, which, being regarded as dangerous, are always carefully pulled out; sometimes protecting tattoo-marks are
applied instead of paint, especially by the women. Among the *Tobas*, T
persons of both sexes generally have the face and forehead painted red. 302
But besides this typical facial painting the Toba women — seldom the men — are in the habit of making special patterns or ornaments upon their cheeks on certain occasions. The patterns used by the Tobas seem to be comparatively few in number; we do not find among them the same abundance of designs as for instance among the Choroti and the Ashluslay. Custom does not require that any special kind of pattern should be applied on a particular occasion. Every woman, for instance for a religious dance or feast, paints upon her face what designs she likes and invents at the moment.

If one asks a Toba girl why she paints her face, she will in most cases T
simply give the answer that it is considered beautiful, sometimes she will 302
say that it is to please and attract the men. When I asked other people 832
about the matter I was told that the Toba girls paint themselves when they particularly desired a man. Yet it was perfectly clear that this cannot have been the only motive for thus decorating the face, for facial painting was not practised only by unmarried girls but also by young
married women, who ought not to have had any reason to put on such T
an outward sign for the men. As a matter of fact, on closer inquiry I 841
found that the Toba women are in the habit of painting themselves *at* 302
the time of their menses, in order to have a protective charm against the
evil influences of which they especially then stand in fear. The ideas 789

841 which induce the Indian woman to paint her face during menstruation
302 are the same as those which have given rise to the custom of secluding
789 her and covering her ventral parts and her head during the first menstruation and during child-birth. Next to the genitals, the uncovered
826 face is the most critical part of the human body, and it is a universal
832 Indian belief that evil spirits may enter the body through such natural
841 openings as the mouth, the nostrils, the eyes, and the ears. Yet the
302 statement that the Toba girls paint themselves to attract the men contains some truth. The Indian woman as a matter of fact is most desirous of a man during her menstrual periods. We can therefore understand how this desire has — in the case of unmarried girls — come to act as a secondary motive for facial painting.

841 A young Toba woman during her menstruation appeared with a
302 couple of arrow-heads painted on each cheek with the points directed outwards as if to avert some evil influences. Another had on each cheek an ornament apparently representing the open mouth of some wild animal, showing the teeth. Both arrows and teeth of animals play an important part as magical charms in South America.

302 The magical significance of body-painting is also obvious in cases
789 where it is done for purely religious dances and other kinds of conjurations. Thus most of the men and women who take part in the magical dance *Nahót dónaaron* have the face painted, generally having the whole face crudely smeared with the red dye, or blackened with charcoal, but sometimes even wearing special patterns or ornaments. The object of such facial paintings is to afford a protection against the evil spirits with whom the dancers enter into relation, and to aid in their conjuration. Similarly, when the medicine-men proceed to exercise their profession by curing sick people, they are frequently painted red or black in the face.

302 The Tobas moreover practise body-painting on occasions of mourn-
765 ing, and not merely to display their sorrow, but to frighten away the death-demon. When a man, especially an old man, dies, his widow, daughters, and other female relatives blacken their faces with charcoal. In a case which came under my notice a woman blackened her face in this way at the same moment as her father died. The spirit of the dead, which is always feared, is believed to be most dangerous to the relatives at the moment when it leaves the body. It may pass into them and cause their death, and as women are always more exposed to supernatural dangers of every kind than men, they have naturally to be more careful. But the spirit shuns the blackened face. It may be that the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Matacc
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T 302 765 [822]

odd appearance which the charcoal gives the face acts as a deterrent; but probably some mysterious magical properties are also ascribed to the soot or charcoal itself. Black is held to be a more powerful means of inspiring evil demons with fear than other colours; hence it has especially become the colour of sorrows; for the spirits of the recently departed, or the demons who cause disease and death, are, after all, the most dreaded of all supernatural beings.

Even ornamental painting may be applied after a death. Thus an old woman had painted a small arrow in brown colour on each cheek in the evening of the day a brother of hers had died. The true significance of this face-painting may be inferred from the fact that in the same evening all the inhabitants of the village carried arrows or sticks in their hands when they moved about outside their huts, and that the nearest relatives of the dead, who had abandoned the house of death, had made themselves a whole fence of arrows stuck in the ground, inside which they spent the night. The object of these precautions was professedly to keep off the death-demon, and the same was certainly the object of the ornamental arrows painted on the woman's cheeks. The Indians in fact believe that they can intimidate their supernatural foes in the same way as their natural enemies.

T 302 726

Lastly, the Tobas, like other South American Indians, are in the habit of painting the body before they march out to battle. This kind of body-painting has already been described in connection with Indian warfare.

C 302 881

The facial paintings of the *Choroti* show a greater variety of design than those of the Tobas. These ornamental designs are applied for feasts and dances, and since the latter in many cases have apparently a profane character, it may seem to a superficial observer as if the body-painting of the Choroti had for its object only to embellish the appearance. Such a conclusion however would be a mistake, since the Choroti dances, as we have seen, are in really in their nature a sort of magical conjuration. Similarly, the feasts held in the honour of young girls at puberty have a purely religious significance. At a feast of this kind where I was present most of the men who took part in the ceremonies had painted on their faces ornamental designs in red and black colours. Many of them had painted on each cheek an X-shaped design which is frequently met with in the ornamental art of the South American Indians and which is evidently nothing but an impressionistic drawing of the human body, representing for instance the breast and the stomach, of

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913) 1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

C 382 881 the body of some animal. The magical nature of these ornaments was likewise obvious.

M 382 789 Among the *Mataco*, who in general are more addicted to religion and superstition than the Choroti, the character of facial painting as a magical charm is more conspicuous. These Indians give facial painting different names according as it is used by men or women and depending on its colour. Thus the red painting of women is called *eruháh*, whereas M [765] the red painting of the men is called *ováittáh* (a name evidently derived from the word *aittáh* demon). The black painting is called *letáh*. It is especially used as a sign of sorrow. When a Mataco man dies, his widow and daughters blacken their faces with charcoal, regarding this as a protection against the death-demon. Similarly, for some time after a death the younger men every evening perform the dance *Katináh*, and M [751] all those taking part in the dance have their faces blackened. — The red painting again is applied as a means of giving the body strength and as a direct protection against evil spirits causing sickness.

M 301 789 Many *personal ornaments* of the Chaco Indians, for instance ear-tubes, necklaces, feather ornaments etc., are of the nature of charms or amulets against evil spirits. The feather ornaments most customary among the Chaco tribes are ostrich plumes, and these, as I have shown in my *Civilization of the South American Indians* have originally not been decorations in the civilized sense of the word, but magical charms, a character which they still preserve for instance among such tribes as the Chamacoco and Lenguas in Paraguay. Among the Choroti, who likewise at their great feasts in December and January wear great ostrich plumes as ornaments, this is not equally conspicuous in accordance with the fact that in many cases the Choroti culture shows traces of an M [756] incipient degeneration. On the other hand, in the description I have given before of a Mataco dance performed to conjure disease demons and in which the sorcerers had ostrich feathers fastened to the ankles, wrists, head, and waist,[1]) the »mystic» significance of these »ornaments» is quite obvious. Similarly, when another writer states that the Mataco in some parts of the Argentine Chaco not only use ostrich plumes as head-ornaments, but also apply them to the face as a sort of beard, which gives them a grotesque and ferocious appearance, or wear them round the wrists in the way of bracelets,[2]) one cannot fail to recognize superstitious motives behind these arrangements.

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[1]) See *supra*, p. 137.

[2]) Baldrich. *Las comarcas virgenes*, p. 231.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913) 1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

The *ear-tubes* which are worn as ornaments for instance by the Cho- C
roti, Ashluslay and Toba-Pilagá and which consist of wooden plugs or 301
pieces of cane, sometimes of tremendous size, are likewise nothing but 759
magical charms or amulets. This was clearly indicated by the Choroti,
who told me that the ear-discs are worn to prevent the evil spirits, the
möhsek, from penetrating into the ears. Their hugeness and peculiarity
is evidently thought to act as a deterrent upon the spirits, and there
seems to be the idea that the larger they are the more efficacious.

The Indians of the Pilcomayo use various kinds of *necklaces*, and it C
seems to be the rule that among the most primitive tribes, such as the 301
Choroti and Ashluslay, they are more worn by men than by women, 751
among the more civilized Tobas again more by women than by men.
Speaking of the dress of the Choroti, I mentioned the large and costly
kind of necklace consisting of snail's shells elaborately fashioned into
small round buttons with a hole drilled in the centre and closely strung
together. The necklace, called *lähslehuésle* in the Choroti language, is
not only an ornament but at the same time a magical charm. The Choroti
no doubt gave me the true explanation of their original significance
when they told me that the necklace is a protection against sickness.
The evil spirits, according to the idea of these Indians, preferably attach
themselves to the throat or the chest, because catarrhs are very common
in the Chaco during the dry season. The spirits are believed to enter
into the body through the throat or the breast, but this is prevented by
the protecting necklace. Hence, when a Choroti Indian sells his neck-
lace or leaves off wearing it, his comrades say that he will most certainly
soon fall ill. The same idea I found prevailing among the Mataco-Noc- M
ténes of Bolivia, where such ornaments are worn by both sexes. Thus 751
the son of a chief, who was just at the age of puberty, one day appeared 301
painted red in the face with *urucú*, and with a large necklace which
covered the neck and the breast. When I asked the father why his son
had put on these things, he answered: »It is in order that he may not
fall ill». Both among the Mataco and the Choroti it is customary that C M
children of both sexes go totally naked up to the age of eight to ten 291
years, but nearly always they wear collars and facial paintings which 301
most certainly are not »ornaments» in the civilized sense of the word. 302

Among the South American Indians in general it is a common custom M
to tie round a limb, for instance the wrist or the leg, a leather strap 301
or some other kind of band, professedly with a view to making the arm 789
or the leg strong. The Chaco Indians also commonly wear such ligatures 755

301 789 755 and they are not even meant to be decorations. Among the Choroti it was no rare thing to see old men and women — especially when they were suffering from some pulmonary catarrh or cough, or from rheumatism — wearing a cord or strap bound tightly round the chest. The idea appeared to be that the demon who had entered into the chest and caused the evil should be forced to leave the body or at least prevented from penetrating further. On one occasion I met an old woman whose right forearm had been paralyzed, probably through a fit of apoplexy. She had a dirty woollen band tied round the arm at the wrist, and when I wanted to remove the useless thing, she would not allow it, declaring that it was »good». I soon learnt that the arm had been seized by an evil *mōhsek*, and realised that the band was »good» as a sort of charm against the demon. Just as civilized people may, in a case of snake-bite, apply a ligature or cord round the bitten limb above the wound so as to prevent the poison from spreading, so the Indians consider such ligatures as preventive of evil spirits. Among the Choroti the band is not put on with any ceremonies, but probably the material itself is supposed to have some mysterious power. However this may be, in these cords or bands tied round the breast or the arms, we have, I think, the most simple specimens of bracelets, girdles, and other magical ornaments of the same type used by the Indians.

In addition to the magical ornaments here touched upon the Chaco Indians use various kinds of amulets and charms consisting of the tusks or claws of the jaguar or other wild animals, in feathers of birds, mussel shells etc., but I shall not dwell upon this side of the practical religion of the Indians. What I have still to pay particular attention to are their funeral rites and ceremonies.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ideas of future life and funeral ceremonies.

Although the Chaco Indians certainly do not believe in the »immorta- 775
lity of the soul» — an expression often abused, especially by Christian
missionaries — they all believe in the continued existence of the soul 774
after death. Their ideas about the future life are much the same as those
found among most primitive peoples. Man is, as it were, a double being;
in the visible body there resides an ethereal shadow-like being, mostly
invisible, which is its life-essence and the particular seat of which is the
chest. That the soul is thought of as being in its nature a shadow-like
form appears especially from the name given it by the Tobas: *kadepakál*,
which means »our (*i. e.* the human) shadow». The Choroti usually speak
of »the dead one» (*yál*) whereas the Mataco call the soul *kusitah*, a word
the etymology of which is obscure. When man is asleep this ethereal
being is believed to have left its abode for the moment, and what he
experiences in his dreams is believed to be really experienced by the
soul during its wanderings. When he awakes it returns to the body.
In death, on the other hand, the soul has left its abode for ever. This [761]
is the work of the evil demon who entered into the body causing disease
and death.

Leaving its bodily frame at the moment of death, the soul is set 775
free to an active and independent existence and changed into a super-
natural being of whom the Indians as a rule stand in great fear. According to the ideas they have of the existence and activity of the soul after its separation from the body, the mysterious spirit at first hovers about its old abode, the dead body, and the house where the departed lived, being then particularly dangerous to the surviving relatives. The danger is greatest before the corpse has been buried. The Indians also fancy that the soul follows the body to the grave, and their burial

[p.189]

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba S1/2

M 115 customs in fact seem particularly to aim at interring the soul with the body. Later on, it is thought, the soul leaves for the forests and the plains, or rises towards the sky, becoming one of those innumerable demons who people the spiritual world of the Indians.

T 115 172 This belief prevails among all Chaco tribes. None of the more primitive Indians, neither the Choroti, nor the Mataco nor the Ashluslay, have developed ideas about a hades, a realm of the dead, where the souls of the departed are assembled. Such a belief is only encountered among the Tobas, the most advanced of the Pilcomayo tribes, who nevertheless at the same time keep to the primitive notion about a soul following the dead body to the grave. When a man dies, the Tobas told me, his »good spirit« (*peyák nötto*) takes his soul (*kadepakál*) to the Paradise of the Indians. This Paradise is in the heavens and is called *Piyim* (*piyim* = heaven). It is situated in the east where the sun rises. The *Piyim* does not, however, altogether coincide with the sky. It is farther off, *above* the sky, for »upon the visible heaven the sun dies at night, but in the happy resting-place of the dead Tobas the sun never dies«. Night and darkness do not exist there, day and sunshine continually reign. In the *piyim* there are great villages and nice houses, fish and other eatables abound, the men are constantly drinking algarobabeer and maizebeer. Disease and death and other evils which embitter the earthly life do not exist there. The men also marry and beget children there, for both men and women are taken to *Piyim* after death. — In short, in the ideas which the Tobas entertain of a Paradise or realm of the dead we find a simple idealisation of earthly conditions. As the Tobas themselves expressed their view on this point: since the earthly life is connected with so many evils we imagine that the future life must be so much better and happier.

I may add that ideas of the Tobas about a Paradise and the future destiny of the soul have nothing to do with moral considerations. Every Toba is taken to *Piyim* after death, independently of the good or bad character he showed during life. Likewise, his social position makes no difference in his destiny after death.

T 171 177 Whereas the Tobas are the only tribe on the Pilcomayo which has developed a theory about a special resting-place for the dead, the half-civilized Avas in the north have similar ideas of the destiny of the soul after death. The Paradise of the Avas is called Ibuoca: it is a sort of »happy fields« where the departed souls go and where they lead a joyous life, feasting and drinking maize beer. Since the Bolivian Tobas have

intercourse with the Avas, it is possible that in their ideas of the future 171
abode of the soul they have been influenced by their neighbours in the
north. Such an influence, however, need not necessarily be assumed 177
since ideas of this kind are held by many uncivilized peoples in South
America and in other parts of the world and may be regarded as the
natural outcome of religious evolution.

In any case it seems clear that the idea of *Piyim*, where the departed 775-
soul is inmediately taken, and whence it does not return, is inconsis-
tent with the precautions which the Tobas take to inter the soul together 761
with the body, to drive it away from the village, etc. This contradiction may be partly due to the fact that the latter, more primitive, idea has not yet lost its hold upon the mind of the Tobas, nor been wholly supplanted by the younger notion of the heavenly resting-place. But with regard to the funeral and mourning customs it is necessary to make a distinction between *the soul of the dead person* and *the evil demon who caused death* by entering into the body. Many of the rites and ceremonies which are performed at the funeral and afterwards are in fact directed more against the latter than against the former. When, for instance, an epidemic rages in a village it is believed that it is visited by an evil demon who wanders about attacking and killing people. The demon is not content with taking one man's life, but is believed to look for more victims. and the nearest relatives of the dead are then especially in danger. However, in practice the difference between such disease and death demons and the spirit of the dead is not always clearly maintained. The Tobas also believe that the disease demon, having once got possession of the patient and caused his death, will thereafter remain in his body and, moreover, seize his spirit or soul as well, with the result that he is himself altogether changed into an evil demon independently of what has been his character in life. This propensity of the death demon, to identify himself with the deceased, makes the Indian ideas about the spirits of the departed more complicated, and also explains why persons who in their life-time have perhaps been loved and esteemed, are after death feared as malignant and dangerous beings. This change has taken place owing to the operation of the strange demon who invaded the deceased. The greater magical power a person has had in life, the
more dangerous will he become after death, for the evil demon in pos-
session lays hold of this power. This is the true reason why old people, [888]
and especially sorcerers, are so greatly feared after death.

Savages are not able to work out and systematise their ideas in the 000

000 same clear logical way as civilised people, and their theories in religious matters are not, therefore, free from contradictions. This is especially the case when ideas belonging to an older and a newer stratum of religious thought are mingled. What the ethnologist has to do in such cases is to state what beliefs are actually held; but he ought not to try to reconcile the inconsistencies.

763 The funeral customs of the Chaco Indians appear from the following description of a burial which I witnessed in a Toba village; the dead person was an old man: —

As soon as it became clear that the patient could not recover and that death was imminent, the female relatives of the sick man began loudly to wail and shout. At the same moment as he breathed his last, his wife and daughter blackened their faces with charcoal, washing it away soon afterwards. The man died in the afternoon shortly before the 764 approach of darkness. There was not, therefore, time to bury him the same day, as the Tobas usually do. All relatives of the deceased, who had lived in the same house as he, at once retired from it and left the dead man alone there close to a big fire previously made. The door of [513] the house was then carefully shut and barricaded with various blocks and poles; even a *catre* (a sort of bedstead made of laths) was turned over it. Outside the door thus closed another big fire was made. At some distance from this the relatives of the dead man encamped for the night on the ground beside a third fire which was kept up during the whole night. The spot where they stayed was moreover fenced round with a great number of arrows stuck in the ground. Nearly all the inhabitants in the village, even the women, were seen to bear arrows or large sticks in their hands when they moved about outside their houses this evening. An old sister of the deceased appeared with an arrow painted in brown colour on each cheek. When darkness set in, a peculiar purification ceremony with fire took place. Some of the men now and then seized a brand from the fire which was made outside the house of death, and, incessantly swaying it round in all directions, they went through the village far into the forest, from time to time uttering loud shouts. After a while they again returned to the house from which they had started. This procedure was repeated several times, the men always starting from the fire outside the house of the dead man, and carrying the brands in different directions into the forest. This purification ceremony is called *koyodänatti*.

The following morning, at dawn, the dead Indian was carried to the

forest close to the river to be buried, followed by the wailing women. 764
He was laid in the grave naked and in a half-sitting posture with the head bent down between the knees. The grave was carefully filled up, and a small mound was made upon which a great number of branches of trees, provided with big thorns, were afterwards placed.

As soon as the burial was finished the relatives made two big fires 768
close to the grave, where the clothes in which they had carried the corpse were burned as well as various others of his belongings: his *poncho* or mantle, his trousers and waist-belt, his hat, his nets, his bow and arrows, the goat's skin which every Toba Indian possesses, etc. During all these operations the loud and exaggerated wailing of the women was heard from time to time.

A Toba grave: the tomb is formed by a number of thorny tree branches, and behind it a big fire is burning.

The burning of the property of the deceased was continued later outside the house in which he had died. Everything which had belonged to him or been in some contact with him was left to be consumed by the flames. His clay vessels were broken, even the bedstead where he had lain was destroyed. Every time the women were obliged to enter the house to fetch something, they gave vent to loud wailing. Finally the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco
Toba S112

768 house itself was pulled down and partly burnt. At some distance from
it the relatives started to build themselves a new dwelling, but the fear
of the ghost overcame them, and after some days they left the village
entirely and went off to another place to settle among their relatives there.

764 The burial-party, having returned to the village after the interment,
sat down to drink beer brewed of maize. Both men and women took
part in the drinking-bout, the women as usual drinking separately from
the men.

The wife and daughter of the deceased the same day cut off the hair of their heads and burnt it.

776 It is evident that most of the ceremonies described were inspired by
fear of the death-spirit. The spirit is not only supposed still to reside
761 in the dead body which is therefore shunned, but also to move about
789 in the village looking for other victims. He is particularly attached
to all things with which the departed has been in contact. The Indians fancy that they can expel or intimidate the invisible persecutor by the same material means to which they would have recourse against a human enemy. Thus in the case described, they tried to shut the spirit in the house where the corpse lay by barricading the door with poles, to inspire him with fear by means of arrows and sticks, and so forth. When I asked the relatives why they fenced round the place where they spent the night with arrows, they gave the characteristic answer that they were »good«; this meant that they were an effective protection against the malicious demon. The Indians generally use the same expression of amulets, as well as of religious ceremonies and conjurations, when one asks them why they are performed. — Arrows play an important part as charms or amulets among the South American Indians.

789 Another effective means of expelling evil spirits is *fire*, and the many
fires which the Indians made during the critical night were typical of
783 the Indian view on this point. The fires which are frequently kept
burning in the Indian villages at night have for their object not only
372 to keep off wild animals and mosquitos but also evil spirits. The particular
ceremony with the fire brands which were carried about in the village in the evening (*koyadänatti*) had a similar magical object, namely, to purify the village and drive the death-demon away into the forest. Such purification ceremonies with fire after a death are customary among most Chaco tribes.

764 The thorny branches which were laid upon the grave were intended
775 partly to secure the dead body against wild animals, partly to prevent

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI2
Choroti SK6

the death-spirit from rising from the grave. The Tobas believe that T if shortly after the burial the body is exhumed, the spirit will come out and 764 may transform himself into a tiger which will kill the people. But the 775 latter may sometimes happen even without any particular profanation of the burial-place.

The customs here described with particular reference to the Tobas M are typical of the burial customs of the Pilcomayo tribes in general. C Thus the Choroti and the Mataco as a rule bury the corpse in a seated 764 or reclining posture as do the Tobas. There are however exceptions to this rule, and at least in one case which came under my notice the dead Choroti man had been buried in a lying posture. At each end of the grave had been placed a clay pot, partly filled with water. The idea underlying this arrangement was not quite clear. Since among the Indians supernatural power is frequently ascribed to clay pots, it is probable that they had been placed on the tomb for some superstitious reasons, perhaps with a view to keeping off the death-demon. I may add that among the Chaco Indians offerings of food and drink, or other kinds of offering, are not generally made to the spirits of the departed. Certain traces of food and drink offerings have been found among the Mataco, but on the whole we may say that the cult of the dead, which plays such an important part in the religion of most South American Indians, is unknown to the natives of the Gran Chaco. When I asked the Choroti whether they would not offer food and drink to the spirit of an Indian who had recently been buried, they laughed and answered: »He is dead, he wants no food». Still of course neither the Choroti nor other Chaco M Indians have wholly divested their minds of the primitive idea that in C the after-life the soul has to a certain extent the same wants and appetites [775] as in this earthly life.

As a rule the place where a person has been buried is not, among the Choroti and the Mataco, marked by any tomb or heap of earth thrown up over the grave. Some tribes, however, at any rate the Choroti, are in the habit of constructing, over the place, a primitive kind of hut, consisting of a roof of twigs and grass resting upon four poles. The hut is said to be »the habitation of the *móhsek*». Chiefs and old family fathers are particularly honoured in this way after death.

The customs practised immediately after a death are in their main features the same in all Chaco tribes. The Choroti, as soon as the sick Indian has drawn his last breath, start to make a tremendous noise with all sorts of rattles and by shouting and wailing. The medicine-men

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

M C 764 M [535] chant the whole night, beating drums and shaking rattles, while the women from time to time utter their peculiar dirge. Similarly among the Tobas drums and rattles are at work for several nights after the death takes place. Among the Mataco dancing forms part of the death-feast, the ceremonial dance *Katindh* being performed every night for a long time. The men taking part in this ceremony have their face blackened with charcoal as a «sign of sorrow», but in reality as a protection against the death-demon. As a rule the Indians would not admit that they feared the departed soul. On the contrary, the Mataco told me that when the medicine-man beats his drum in the evening, he at the same time says to the departed soul in an insinuating voice: «May you stay here, may you not leave us!» The Choroti again, in speaking of the deceased use the stereotyped phrase: *uáhsah* (= *tis sáhe*), *i. e.* «he is good», although at the same time their whole behaviour clearly shows that they stand in fear of him.

M 764 273 The drinking of some intoxicating liquor also forms an important part of a death-feast, and it is considered necessary that the men taking part in the drinking-bout should get more or less intoxicated. The strong algaroba beer is most appreciated, but at those times of the year when there is no algaroba the Indians have to be content with beer brewed of tusca or chañar. Only in exceptional cases do the Chaco Indians drink maize beer at their feasts. The drinking of intoxicating liquors on these occasions has a ceremonial character and is believed to fill those taking part in it with power of resistance against the disease and death-demon.

M C 783 768 The way in which the Tobas purify the village after a death is typical of the Chaco Indians. Among all Pilcomayo tribes purification is chiefly carried out by means of fire brands which are waved about in all directions in the evening of the day on which the death takes place. Similarly, the destruction of the property of the deceased, the burning of his clothes and his other belongings, the destruction of the gourds from which he has eaten and drunk and, in general, of all things with which he has been in contact, are customary among the Choroti, the Mataco, and the Ashluslay. The taboo of death is attached to them and they can no longer be used. The whole house of course particularly falls under the death taboo and is therefore always burned. But the Mataco and the Choroti are generally not content with burning the hut where the deceased lived and where he died, but as a rule destroy the whole village, considering it polluted to such extent by the contagion of death that the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

relatives of the departed cannot live safely in it. This is the reason why in the Gran Chaco a traveller so often encounters remains of Indian villages which have evidently been burnt and abandoned by their inhabitants. The radical destruction of the whole village is always resorted to when several deaths have taken place at short intervals. The relatives of the deceased, when they abandon their own village, generally go and live with their relatives and friends in a neighbouring village, where they stay for some time, or until they decide to found a new settlement in some other part of the country. Custom requires that when the mourners arrive at the other village, they shall be received with wailing. M C 783 768

The Tobas, although they always burn the house where a death has taken place, do not as a rule deem it necessary to destroy the whole village. Similarly the relatives of the deceased generally remain there, building themselves a new dwelling; in other cases they leave the place for some time. The other inhabitants of the village, on the other hand, make no notable change in their mode of life, since they are not to the same extent exposed to danger from the death-spirit as the nearest relations. T 768

Weeping and wailing plays an important part among the mourning ceremonies of the Indians, although it is always limited to the women and the children. The fact that wailing is ceremonial clearly appears from the circumstances under which it takes place. Although it is beyond doubt that the Indians are capable of real feelings of sorrow at the death of a near relation, yet their intense fear of death — including the fear of the dead body — is apparent throughout their mourning customs. The object of the wailing seems to be partly to propitiate the spirit of the departed relative by showing him how deeply the survivors grieve at his death, partly to frighten away the death-demon by the noise. The latter point of view is probably the most important. Wailing is continued for several months after the death. The length of the wailing period varies according to the social importance of the deceased. A great chief is mourned in all tribes for longer than an ordinary member of the community, in some cases up to a whole year. As to the manner of wailing there is a marked distinction between the Tobas and the Mataco on the one hand, and the Choroti on the other. The wailing of the Toba women is like a greatly exaggerated loud crying and sobbing which is seemingly the expression of a desperate sorrow. The wailing of the Choroti women is calmer and more like the weeping of a child. Every lamentation consists of a series of sounds produced in a high falsetto voice and M C T 765 152 C 765

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765 forming a falling scale in a minor key, which makes a very peculiar
impression. At the time of mourning the women and children commence
this wailing at fairly regular intervals and all at once, as if it were agreed
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576 upon. To one who lives for some time in a Choroti village it is evident
that wailing forms part of Indian etiquette. Not only must the mourners,
when they arrive from another village, which has been abandoned on
account of a death, be received by a choir of weeping women and children;
any guest who arrives in a village shortly after a death has taken place
there is received in the same way. When in March 1912 I visited the
Choroti in the interior of their land, where no European had yet penetrated,
I noticed with astonishment that on my arrival at a village I was
received with loud wailing by the women and children. I soon learnt
that a great chief had died some time ago; but the fact that the wailing
was renewed to receive me remained unexplained. I was told, however,
that this peculiar way of receiving strangers was prescribed by Choroti
custom. The most probable explanation seems to me that it is feared
lest the spirit of the defunct should revisit his people in a strange disguise,
and that the wailing has for its object to propitiate him or to frighten
him away. Such ideas prevail among other South American tribes
also, both in the Chaco and elsewhere.

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562 There are certain other customs observed in connection with mourning,
but they are as a rule limited to the women. Among all Pilcomayo
tribes it is customary that when a man dies, his widow, daughters, and
sisters cut their hair short with the sharp teeth of the *palometa* fish and
burn it. Ceremonial wailing always attends the cutting of the hair.
When I asked the Choroti why a widow cuts and destroys her hair after
the death of her husband, I was told that the dead husband, who wants
his wife to follow him to the grave, is believed to attack her through
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765 the hair. In order to rid herself of this danger she shaves it off. Exactly
the same belief prevails among the Tobas: the dead husband or father
will seize his surviving wife or daughter by the hair and cause her to fall
ill and die. Among the Tobas a widow cuts her hair twice, first immediately
after the husband's death, the second time some months later
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[602] when the hair has again grown long. At the same time she repeats the
wailing. Similarly the nearest female relatives have to diet, in so far as
they are not allowed to eat fish for many months. If they infringe the
rules of diet in regard to fish they may sicken and die. After a Toba
woman has cut her hair the second time she may again eat fish, her
mourning is over and she is allowed to marry again. Even some of the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

men abstain from eating fish for some time after the death of a near relation. T 765

Apart from the custom of cutting the hair neither the Tobas nor other Pilcomayo tribes nowadays practise ceremonial mutilations of any kind. Formerly however, as the Tobas told me, they practised the following mourning custom. When a woman died, her eldest son had to cut off one of his finger nails. The nail was fastened to a string and hung round the neck of a dog, which was thereafter driven away. If the son omitted to do this, it was believed that the soul of the woman would enter into the nail and kill him in the shape of a tiger into which it would transform itself. This could be prevented by sending away the nail. The dog carrying it away would meet some other tribesman into which the soul would enter and thus become harmless, for the spirits of the dead are harmful only to the nearest relatives. The Indian who told me this added that the custom is no longer practised by the Tobas, because nowadays it very seldom happens that people are killed by tigers and thus the belief that women are changed into such beasts after death has lost its foundation. This again, according to the Indian belief, is owing to the fact that the medicine-men are now able to provide against such sad eventualities by their incantations and conjurations. T 765 775

As to the explanation of these observances, we have already seen that the abstention from eating fish is due to the idea that the death-demon may possibly hide in the fish and gain entrance into the body. Of special interest are the mourning customs relating to hair and nails. Hair-cutting as a mourning practice of women is met with among most South American Indians and — like other kinds of mutilation — are essentially purification ceremonies of purely magical significance. In the hair and the nails according to primitive belief the vital power of the human body is concentrated. One who possesses these essential parts of a person's body is believed to possess his soul, through which he will be able to exert magical influence upon him. If this is so, it is conceivable that invisible supernatural enemies would take particular interest in these parts. Consequently, when a woman is in a delicate situation, she takes the precaution to remove and destroy these critical parts of her body. According to Indian belief, women are always more exposed to supernatural dangers than men, and therefore have to be more careful in every respect. M 765 826

The fear of the dead is also manifested in that their *names* are forbidden to be mentioned. This is another general superstition among the M 765 551

765 Chaco tribes. These savages as a rule are very reluctant to mention their 551 true Indian names. Thus, as I have mentioned before, when the Chaco Indians visit the whites they nearly always assume names for use instead of their real names. If the Indians are thus careful with the names of the living, those of the dead are particularly regarded as taboo and must never be mentioned, especially by the nearest relatives. When I asked one of my Indian friends about the name of a man who had just died, he hesitated for a moment, looked round, and when he saw that no one of the relatives was near, he *whispered* the name in my ear. This [774] superstition, I believe, is ultimately based on the idea, held by all Indians, that *the soul of a person is inherent in his name*. To know a person's name is therefore the same as to have his soul in one's power, and supernatural influences can be exerted upon him through this invisible part of his personality, just as they can be exerted through a lock of his hair or a piece of his nail. If the soul is believed to be in the name, we can easily understand why the names of the dead are especially taboo. To mention it is the same as to enter into close contact with the departed soul itself, to which the infection of death is attached, and this is supposed to entail unfortunate consequences, at least for the nearest relatives. For an outsider there is evidently not the same personal danger. But since a person may be controlled and conjured through his name, it is further believed that the rest of the dead in the grave may be disturbed by mentioning his name. It is therefore considered a dreadful indiscretion against the relatives to speak of the deceased by name. This is the idea prevailing both among the Tobas and among other Chaco tribes. [195] Generally the Indians do not like to speak about the dead at all, and if they do, their tacit maxim is: *de mortuis nil nisi bene*. The relatives would never admit that they fear a dead parent and regard him as malicious. They always pronounce him to be »good», as if believing that by such a euphemism they may change his character or paralyse the harmful effects arising from him.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

CHAPTER XIX.

Ceremonial games.

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During my stay among the Choroti my attention was drawn to a curious game which was played in all villages in the month of March and evidently had some mystic meaning. The game later on turned out to be »international» in the Chaco, most tribes knowing it and playing it in somewhat different forms. The Choroti call it *syuke*, the Tobas *soka*, the Ashluslay *syúkak*, etc., names which are evidently nothing but different corruptions of the Quichua word *chunca*, ten. Similarly the playing terms in the Chaco are as it were international and of Quichua origin, a fact which seems to support the assumption that at any rate the principal ideas underlying the game have been borrowed from the Quichua Indians.

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I have only studied this game among the *Choroti* and the description I shall give of it in the following pages refers merely to the variety of the game existing among these Indians.[1])

The dice consist of four pieces of wood, which are on one side convex, on the other side quite flat. The convex side is often ornamented with certain incised figures. (See fig. 10, a.)

The player takes two dice in each hand, throws them up smoothly against each other and allows them to fall on the ground. The position taken by the dice on the ground determines the value of the cast. The points are reckoned in the following way:

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[1]) Nordenskiöld described this game in 1910 in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, but its magical or religious significance — which, of course gives it its particular interest — has entirely escaped him. This may in part be due to the fact that Nordenskiöld never saw the game played at the proper season, the beginning of the »winter», but arranged playing-parties at an other season to learn how it was played. On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that many ceremonies, which are in their character magical or religious, have been misunderstood by ethnologists and regarded as purely profane entertainments.

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco

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4 convex sides upwards counts 4. This is called *tasa.*
3 » » » » 0. » » » *lakipu*, nothing.
2 » » » » 1. » » » *shuke.*
1 » » » » 0. » » » *lakipu.*
0 » » » » 2. » » » *kimo*

The counting-board is drawn on the ground and consists of a crescent-shaped row of shallow holes or grooves, 23 in number (Fig. 10, *b*). The numbers 1 and 23 signify the starting-points or »houses» of the players. In each of these grooves every player at the beginning of the game sticks an arrow which serves as a marker. In 2–11 and 13–22 small pegs or cobs of maize are placed, which are called the »sheep» of the players. The groove numbered 12 is empty and somewhat larger than the rest. This is called the »lake» or »river» (*tewk*) and arriving there a player is said to be »drowned».

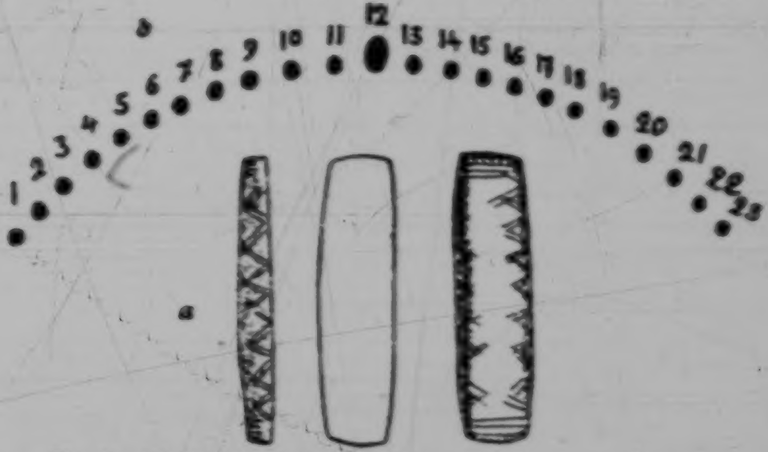

Fig. 10. The Counting-board for *shuke* game and the wooden dice.

The players may be two, four, six, or eight. If we take the simplest case, when the players are only two, A and B, the game is played in the following way:

A begins and throws, for instance, 2 (*kimo*). Then he puts his arrow into the second groove reckoning from his »house», that is to say into

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco

Choroti SK6

number 3. He repeats his throw and throws for instance, 1 (*shuke*). Then he puts his arrow into number 4, and so forth. A continues until he throws 0, whereupon B begins and continues until he throws 0. B then starts from his »house« number 23, proceeding backwards. If a player passes the »river« (12) and enters a hole occupied by his opponent, he is entitled to throw out his opponent's »sheeps«. The object of the game is at first to throw out all the »sheeps« of the opponent, the player passing from one end of the series of grooves to the other and back again. If a player succeeds in placing his marker (arrow) in a groove where his opponent happens to have his own marker, the latter is »killed« (thrown out) and has to start again from the beginning. Every player tries to throw out all the »sheeps« of his opponent and at last his marker also. If he succeeds in doing so he has won. If someone during the game arrives at the »river« (*tauk*), he is »drowned«, and if by the following throw he does not succeed in getting out, (that is, if he throws 0), he is obliged to go back to that groove situated nearest to his »house« where he has still a »sheeps«. 524

Gambling is always connected with the *shuke* game, and the stakes lost — whether it be a collar, a shirt, a pair of trousers or some other valuable object — are always scrupulously paid as real debts of honour. This is no doubt in part due to the fact, that the *shuke* game is not a hazard game in the ordinary sense of the word, but has a ceremonial significance. If the debts were not scrupulously paid, the game would fail to produce the effect which the Indians expect of it, namely, the increase of the edible fruits of the forest. 525 789

What struck me particularly with regard to the *shuke* game was the fact that, at any rate among the Choroti Indians, it is only played at a certain time of the year, more strictly speaking, in the month of March, when the rainy season on the Chaco ends and the dry season or »winter« begins. Then everyone began upon it at once. In all villages *shuke*-dice were carved and the game went on every day for many hours, sometimes from early morning till late in the evening. This very fact seemed to me to indicate that certain mysterious ideas were connected with the game. Besides, the game was played in a strikingly intensive, almost nervous tempo and the results of every cast — *tawa*, shuke, *kima* — were always shouted out in a very loud voice, which could be heard far away. 524 789

The Chorotis expressly declared to me that the *shuke* game is played only at the beginning of the »winter«, when the algaroba (*Prosopis alba*) and other edible fruits of the forest grow scarce. At that time a period begins for the Chaco Indians when they usually have to struggle very

C 524 789 hard for existence. Now the game is supposed to have the effect of *increasing the fruit and making the Indians rich.* This is made possible by virtue of the fact that *among the Indians there is always someone who wins*, from whose luck all will benefit. The Indians believe that just as they can influence the course of nature, hurry on the growth of the crops, by beating drums, dancing, and shaking rattles, so they believe that at this critical period they can enhance the vegetative power of the useful trees and prevent starving by playing *shuke*. It seems to me probable that in this game the magical effects are produced merely by the procedure of playing — by the feverish pace at which the game goes on, and so forth — just as technique and the very rhythm play an essential part in such magical ceremonies as dancing and the beating of drums.

M 524 177 114 That the *shuke* game, so far as its principal features are concerned, has been borrowed by the Choroti from the mountain Indians, as has been suggested even by Nordenskiöld, is a matter beyond doubt and may be inferred from the playing terms themselves which are of Quichua origin (*shuke* = *chunca*, *tauca*, and probably *lima*). On the other hand, it is certain that the Incas never had an exactly similar game, and Nordenskiöld's imagination carries him too far when he tries to show that certain objects, found in archeological excavations on the mountain area of Ecuador, are nothing but counting-boards which have been used for a game more or less identical with the *shuke*. [1]) Nordenskiöld's curious idea of connecting the said mysterious objects with the *shuke* game of the Chaco Indians entirely loses its importance in the face of the fact that, as I have shown elsewhere [2]), the ancient Peruvian and Ecuadorian Indians had several »games of chance», none of which bore the slightest resemblance to the Chaco game just mentioned. The map published by the same ethnographer, showing the supposed distribution of »games of chance» in South America, was therefore decidedly prematurely drawn. [3]) The particular character of the Chaco game has obviously, in

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[1]) See his article »Spieltische aus Peru und Ecuador», in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Heft 2 u. 3. 1918, p. 169.

[2]) See my *Ceremonial Games of the South American Indians* (*Societas Scientiarum Fennica. Commentationes humanarum litterarum*, Helsingfors, 1930).

[3]) Whereas Nordenskiöld erroneously assigns the neighbourhood of Quito in Ecuador as a region where a game like the *shuke* has been practised, he knows nothing of the games of chance I have myself discovered later in that country: the *huairu* game practised in the southern and eastern mountain regions, the *huairitu* and *singu* in vogue among the forest Indians on the rivers Bobonaza and Pastaza.

many details, been determined by local conditions, and therefore must 524
differ from the games customary among the ancient mountain Indians. 177
Thus all ceremonial dice games in the Inca empire seem to have been connected with the *cult of the dead*, an idea which is wholly foreign to the 114
Chaco Indians. Further, the Incas probably knew only of *portable* playing-boards, whereas the Chaco Indians always draw the counting-board on the ground. Moreover, the latter Indians use arrows as markers, the place where the player is »drowned», is called »river», and so forth.

The Chaco Indians, in all probability, have only borrowed the leading 524
ideas underlying the game, together with the terminology, from their neighbours in the west, and to a certain extent invented a new game, 177
giving these borrowings an application of their own. When the primitive Indians from the interior of the country came in contact with the comparatively civilized peoples in the west, they learned to know certain games which were said to have the marvellous effect of making the fields fruitful and filling the granaries of the Indians. We may assume that it was precisely this *practical* importance of the game that impressed the mind of the primitive Indians and induced them to invent a game similar to that customary among the Incas and to ascribe to it a similar magical efficacy. But the *shuke* was not the only game which originated in this way under the influence of the Inca civilization. Various other games, both games of chance and games of skill, seem to be in vogue in the Chaco, even among tribes so distant as the Lenguas of Paraguay, but of their possible ceremonial character nothing is known. If we may trust the ethnologists who have hitherto related the customs of the Chaco tribes, the *shuke* game is the only one to which a magical significance is ascribed.

Nor does he know the *taba* game practised by the Quichua Indians all over the Bolivian mountain area. The value of culture maps so arbitrarily drawn seems to me most doubtful.

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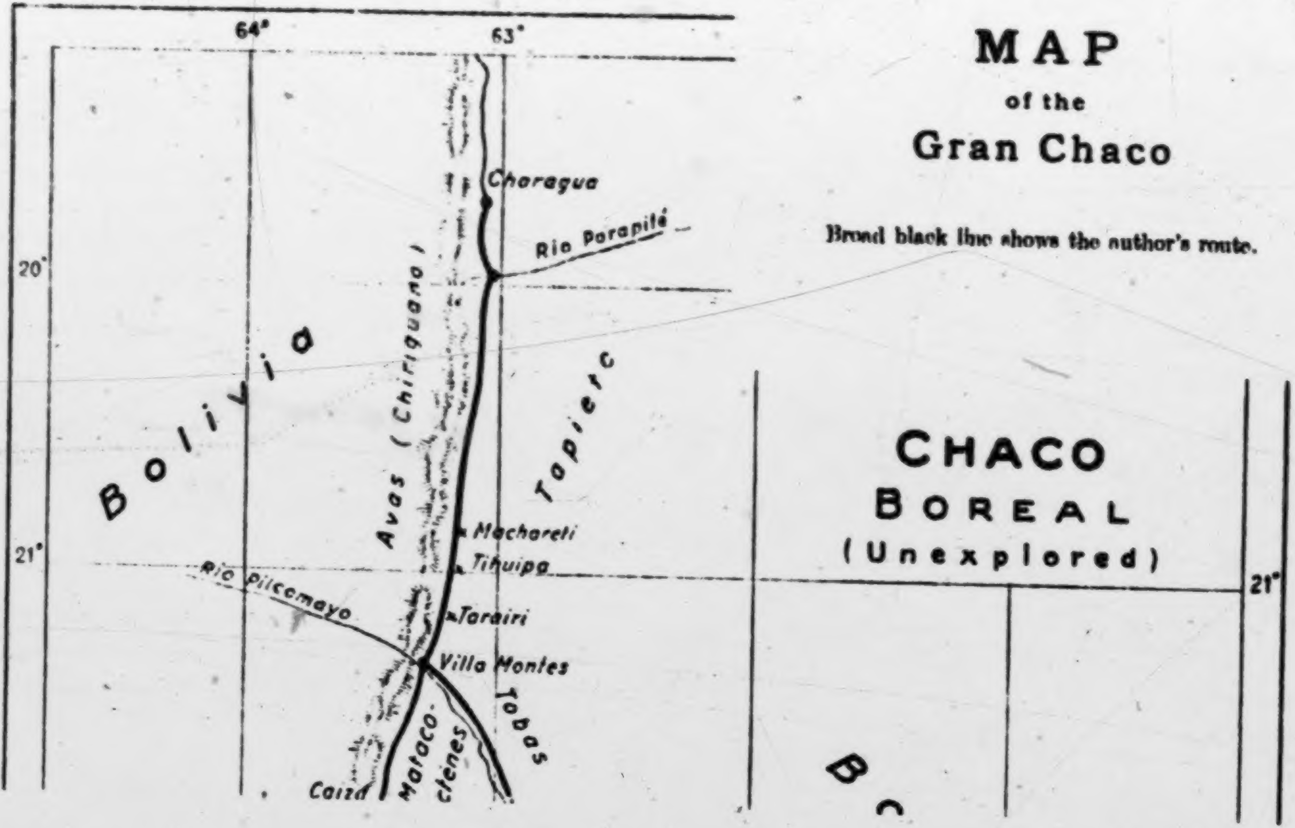

MAP
of the
Gran Chaco

Broad black line shows the author's route.

64°
63°
20°
21°
21°
Charagua
Rio Parapitì
Bolivia
Avas (Chiriguano)
Tapiete
Machareti
Tihuipa
Tarairi
Rio Pilcomayo
Villa Montes
Caiza
Mataco
Mataco-ctenes
Tobas
CHACO BOREAL
(Unexplored)
Bo

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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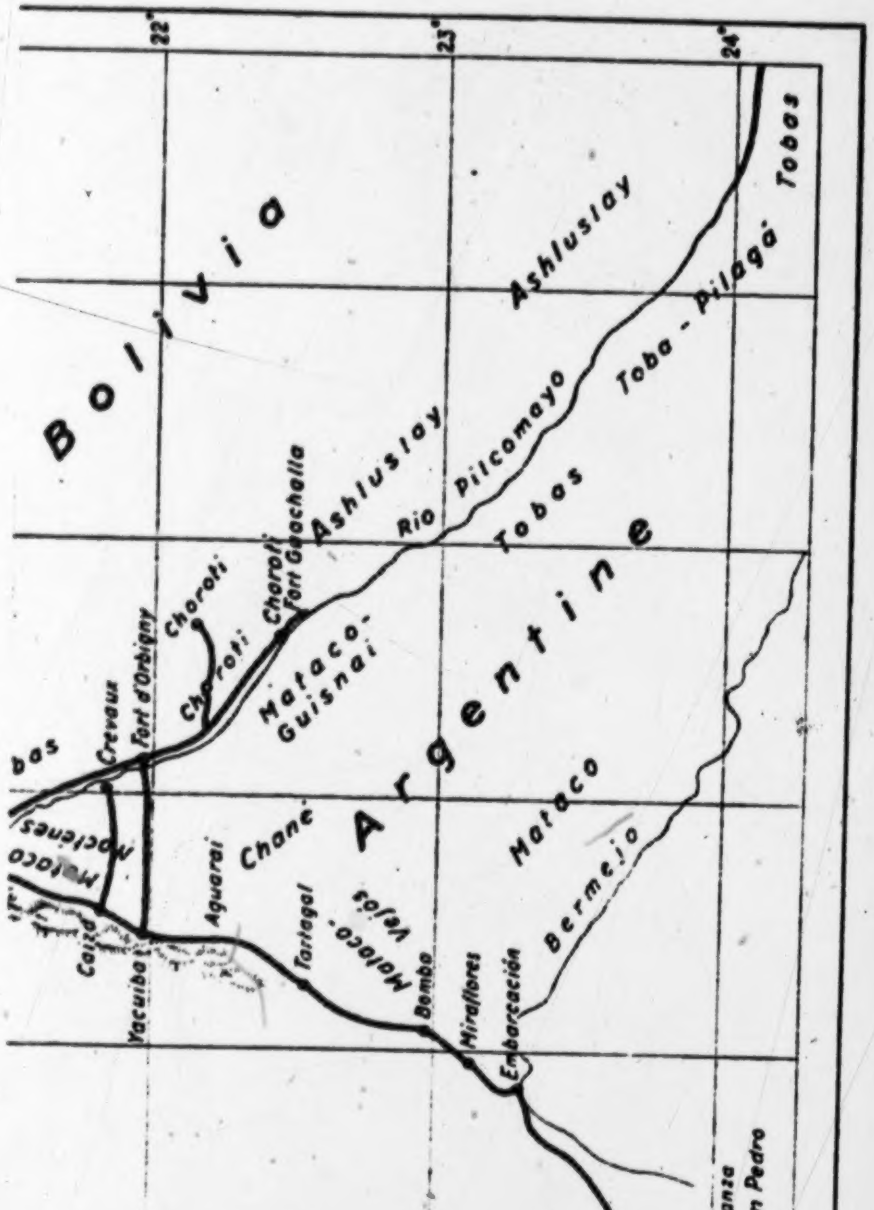
Bolivia
Argentine
Ashluslay
Ashluslay
Rio Pilcomayo
Tobos
Toba - Pilagá
Tobas
Choroti
Choroti
Choroti
Fort Guachalla
Mataco-Guisnai
Crevaux
Fort d'Orbigny
bas
Mataco
Noctenes
Caiza
Yacuiba
Aguarai
Chané
Tartagal
Mataco-Vejós
Bomba
Miraflores
Embarcación
Mataco
Bermejo
Esperanza
San Pedro
22°
23°
24°

[End Map (B)]

113 Toba SI12

[For general cultural information on the Toba Indians, see also 2: Karsten, SI7 Mataco, category 116.]

113 Choroti SK6

[For general cultural information on the Choroti Indians see also 2: Karsten, SI7 Mataco, category 116.]